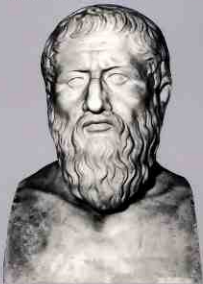


A History of Greek Philosophy

IV Plato: the man and his  
dialogues  
earlier period

W.K.C. GUTHRIE





A HISTORY OF  
GREEK PHILOSOPHY

VOLUME IV

# A HISTORY OF GREEK PHILOSOPHY

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BY  
W. K. C. GUTHRIE

VOLUME IV

PLATO  
THE MAN AND HIS DIALOGUES:  
EARLIER PERIOD



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*The device on the front cover is the head of Plato from a herm in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin.*

## PREFACE

A reviewer of a recent work on theories of perception asked himself the general question what purpose was supposed to be served by historical studies of philosophy. 'Perhaps', he concluded, 'such histories should be regarded as the *Good Food Guide*, which tells you where nourishment is to be found, but does not itself attempt to provide it.' I have not felt this strongly about my earlier volumes, but the aim of a work on Plato must certainly be to send its readers back to Plato himself, whether in Greek or if necessary translated. Here is no ordinary philosopher expounding in sober treatises a system of thought which can be in all essentials abstracted and summarized. Anyone who expects that should start by reading the *Symposium*. We are dealing above all with a tremendous personality, one of the strangest and most individual writers who have ever lived, with a consuming interest not only in ideas but in people. This I have tried to bring out, and this is in itself sufficient reason for an arrangement by dialogues rather than by subjects. (Each has its drawbacks, and as Shorey said, 'no method is quite satisfactory'.)<sup>1</sup> Another is the risk of applying modern divisions of philosophy – ethics, metaphysics, logic and so on – which would inevitably falsify both the method and the content of Plato's thought. To emphasize these points is also my aim in the summaries (intentionally not so called) which in most chapters precede any discussion of a dialogue's content. (Cf. also p. 45 below.)

In the preface to my second volume I quoted an analytical philosopher's statement of the concerns of philosophy as an example of what early Greek philosophy was not. But not all modern thinkers are of the same cast. This statement of Albert Schweitzer's view might have been written about Plato: 'Philosophical inquiry was always viewed by [him] as a means to the pragmatic end of assisting mankind

<sup>1</sup> Shorey, *Unity* 8. The two methods are exemplified in Taylor's and Grube's books respectively. Taylor defends his on pp. vii and 23–5, and Grube his on pp. vii–ix, where he makes the surprising statement that the subjects of the Ideas and the nature of the soul would have appeared to Plato capable of separate treatment.

## Preface

in finding its place and role in the universe, to help it create the good life.<sup>1</sup>

Mr James Olney, in a fascinating book,<sup>2</sup> has suggested that autobiography is to a large extent philosophy, and one may say conversely that all philosophy is in a sense autobiography.<sup>3</sup> When Plato's Socrates, in response to a question of Cebes, feels it necessary to go into 'the general causes of coming into being and perishing' – that is, to reveal to his friends the deepest levels of his philosophy – he can devise no better way of doing it than by narrating an intellectual autobiography, 'my own experiences' as he puts it (*Phaedo* 96a). In this sense I offer my attempt at an introduction to Plato's autobiography.

A reviewer of earlier volumes expressed the hope that I would not spend much time working over Plato and Aristotle because there are already so many excellent accounts of their lives and opinions. There are indeed, and the awareness of them has cast a heavy shadow over this work from the beginning. Yet when one has undertaken to write a history of Greek philosophy it hardly seems right to pass over its greatest and most influential representatives with a mere hasty sketch, and in the end Plato has expanded to two volumes. A friend to whom I made my frequent moan that there are so many books on Plato that it seemed a sin to add to them, replied comfortingly, 'Yes, but you are going to save us from reading all those books.' If I cannot claim that, I have at least done my best to indicate the many different points of view from which Plato has been approached, the contrasting estimates of him as a man and as a philosopher, and of the aims and lessons of the separate dialogues. A historian must deny himself the luxury of dispensing with references to others, claiming perhaps like Léon Robin that it was pointless to indicate agreement and equally so to mention divergences when he felt unable to set out in full his reasons for disagreement. (It seems in any case a little churlish not to acknowledge, where one can, that others have anticipated one's thoughts.) Plato's appeal is almost universal. Besides philosophers (whether students of metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, logic or

<sup>1</sup> George Marshall and David Poling, *Schweitzer, a Biography* (London, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> *Metaphors of Self: the Meaning of Autobiography*.

<sup>3</sup> This has been said by Nietzsche, whom I have quoted (with others who have made a similar point) in vol. I, 117.

## Preface

aesthetics), it extends to Hellenists, historians, political and social scientists, mathematicians, psychologists, theologians, educationists and literary critics.<sup>1</sup> In fact the best excuse for yet another book on Plato is that no two are alike, because each reveals so much of its author as well as its subject.

Since no one man can satisfy all these tastes, I have tried, in the spirit of the *Guide*, to show others the way to a menu that suits them better. This is all the more necessary in that many will doubtless detect that 'certain lack of philosophical sophistication and insight' which my aforementioned critic saw as a possible effect in the eyes of 'professional philosophers'. Not all may agree with his charitable addition that the work was 'generally all the more reliable as a result'. It was the work of one who is 'really an historian, with the historian's care for accuracy about the facts'. To live up to this kindly verdict is certainly my highest aim. Of course only the tiniest fraction of the vast literature on Plato can be cited here, and – except for a few indestructibles, a Grote, Zeller, Wilamowitz and their peers – the selection will inevitably favour the more recent contributions and current controversies. This need not make the *Guide* element ephemeral. One reference leads to several, and a reader who on a favourite topic follows up the clues provided here, far from being starved of secondary material, will probably feel, as I have myself, like another sorcerer's apprentice struggling in the torrent of learning let loose by his own modest researches; and even as one writes, as Heraclitus would say, fresh waters are ever flowing in.

A brief word of warning. I have read a suggestion that when I go wrong it is particularly important that the error should be corrected because this history is coming to be regarded as the standard work in its field. If this is so I can only deprecate it, because, as I hope I have made clear, there can be no final or standard work on Plato, even supposing I were the one to write it. So much must be a matter of individual interests and interpretation, and no one can do more than raise his own edifice of personal judgements on as sound a foundation of fact (about his subject's text, background and so on)

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps I may be permitted to mention in this connexion my Cincinnati lectures on 'Twentieth-century Approaches to Plato'.

## Preface

as possible. This I have tried to do, but questionable opinions, ignorance on some points, and downright mistakes, are inevitable.

The general reader, if such there be, may rest assured that I have adhered to the principle enunciated in the preface to the first volume, that footnotes are unnecessary for an understanding of the argument. Greek words, unless translated or explained, are confined to them, and they provide references to further reading for the specialist and in particular to interpretations differing from my own. If the book is, as I hope, to be read and not simply used as a work of reference, it may be wise to confine oneself to a dialogue, or small group of dialogues, at a time, just as the dialogues themselves are separate wholes, each with its own atmosphere and ethos. Finally I hope that the full analytical table of contents, as well as the index, may in some measure compensate for the disadvantage of arrangement by dialogues instead of subjects.

This volume was already in the press when J. N. Findlay's book *Plato, the Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (1974) came into my hands, and as yet I am in no position to discuss its findings. However, in his preface he says:

A study of Plato which confines itself to the letter of the Dialogues... has ended by stripping Plato of his philosophical dignity and interest, has set him before us as a brilliant, but basically frivolous player-about with half-formed, inconsistent notions and methods, and has failed to explain the persistent, historical sense of him as a deeply engaged thinker, to whom we owe one of the most important, most coherently elaborated, most immensely illuminating ways of regarding the world.

I cannot emphasize too strongly that this is not what a study of the dialogues has done for me, and I trust that the interpretation of them in the following pages, whatever its faults, will not 'fail to explain' that appreciation of his unique merits which Professor Findlay so rightly describes as the outcome of a historical sense.

Unattributed references to 'vol. 1' etc. refer to the earlier volumes of this work.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Most works cited in abbreviated form in the text will be easily recognizable under the author's or editor's name in the bibliography. It may be however helpful to list the following:

## PERIODICALS

<i>AGPh</i>	<i>Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie</i>
<i>AJP</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
<i>BICS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i> (London)
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Classical Journal</i>
<i>CP</i>	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Classical Review</i>
<i>GGA</i>	<i>Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen</i>
<i>HSCP</i>	<i>Harvard Studies in Classical Philology</i>
<i>JHI</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Ideas</i>
<i>JHPh</i>	<i>Journal of the History of Philosophy</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JPh</i>	<i>Journal of Philosophy</i>
<i>PCPS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society</i>
<i>PhR</i>	<i>Philosophical Review</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>Philosophical Quarterly</i>
<i>REG</i>	<i>Revue des Études Grecques</i>
<i>TAPA</i>	<i>Transactions of the American Philological Association</i>

## OTHER WORKS

(Full particulars are in the bibliography)

<i>CGF</i>	<i>Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , ed. Meineke
<i>DK</i>	Diels-Kranz, <i>Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker</i>
<i>KR</i>	G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, <i>The Presocratic Philosophers</i>
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell-Scott-Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th ed.
<i>OCD</i>	<i>Oxford Classical Dictionary</i>
<i>OP</i>	<i>Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i>



## *Abbreviations*

<i>PS</i>	G. Vlastos, <i>Platonic Studies</i>
<i>RE</i>	<i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , ed. Wissowa, Kroll <i>et al.</i>
<i>SPM</i>	<i>Studies in Plato's Metaphysics</i> , ed. R. E. Allen
<i>TGF</i>	<i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> , ed. Nauck
<i>ZN</i>	Zeller–Nestle

*Note:* The dialogues known in England as *Republic* and *Politics* are in some countries called *Politeia* and *Statesman* (in the language of the country) respectively. Non-English readers should be warned that the abbreviation *Pol* indicates the latter work.

# I

## INTRODUCTION

So much I can say about writers past or future who claim that they know the things about which I am in earnest, whether by hearing them from me or others, or discovering them for themselves – that in my view they understand nothing of the matter. There is not, and can never be, a treatise of mine about it, for it cannot be put into words like other subjects of study. Only out of much converse about the subject, and a life lived together, does it suddenly, like a light kindled from a leaping flame, spring up in the soul and thenceforth maintain itself. But this much I do know, that whether written or spoken, it would best be done by me, and if it were badly written, I would be the chief sufferer.

Plato, *Epist.* 7. 341 b–d

These words, whether written by Plato himself or in his name by one of those who had experienced ‘the shared life’ with him, are supported by some remarks in one of his dialogues and must weigh heavily on the mind of anyone who dares to describe and interpret his work. This must be so at any time, but especially at the present stage of Platonic study, when strenuous efforts are being made by some scholars to reconstruct, from hints in Aristotle or the scant remains of others of his pupils, and from writers of later antiquity, the content of Plato’s ‘unwritten doctrines’ (a phrase used once by Aristotle); that is, of the oral teaching which he gave in the Academy and which, so this passage might suggest, must contain his deepest and most strongly held philosophical convictions. It has always been obvious that Aristotle mentions and criticizes as Plato’s doctrines which do not appear in his dialogues, and efforts to interpret these and to assess the credibility of Aristotle’s accounts are by no means new. But the subject has been brought into much greater prominence in the last twelve or fifteen years, in particular by the intensive researches of a group of scholars in Germany, and this has stimulated discussion not only of the question of the ‘unwritten doctrines’ themselves but also of the status of the dialogues which we possess

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and the extent to which they can be said to reflect the serious and mature philosophy of their author. It used to be thought that the difference was chronological, that the doctrines mentioned by Aristotle were only put forward by Plato in his latest years after most if not all of the dialogues were written; but it has now been claimed<sup>1</sup> that such teaching was being given by Plato orally when he was writing the dialogues of the so-called middle period, including the *Republic*, if not even earlier.

I mention this at the beginning to illustrate a more general point, that although it behoves a historian to be as objective as possible, and he may hope to be writing for the future as well as the present, he cannot escape entirely from his own situation in the history of his subject. For us this means the history both of scholarship and of philosophy. In scholarship, another feature of modern writing on Plato is its rediscovery of the intimate connexion between literary form and philosophic content. This insight was already shown by the Neoplatonist Proclus in the fifth century A.D., when he wrote in his commentary on Plato's *Alcibiades*:<sup>2</sup>

The introductory portions of the Platonic dialogues are in accord with their whole purpose. They are not devices thought up by Plato for dramatic effect...nor is their aim purely historical...but as the leaders of our school were aware (and I myself have elsewhere said something of it) they too are dependent on the theme of the dialogues as a whole.

In the nineteenth century this truth was lost sight of, so that Paul Friedländer felt it necessary to repeat Proclus's point in the words (*Plato* I, 232f.): 'One thing, at least, is certain: in Plato philosophy does not begin at the first point of dialectical discussion, but has

<sup>1</sup> By H.-J. Krämer in 'Die grundsätzlichen Fragen der Indirekten Platonüberlieferung', *Idee und Zahl* (1968), 106-50.

<sup>2</sup> In *Alc.* ed. Westerink (1954), p. 8; quoted by Friedländer, *Pl.* I, 366 n. 8. On the history of the matter in modern times, H. Gundert (*Der Plat.* D. 6) notes that Schleiermacher (b. 1768) first saw that form and content belong together, and related this methodically to Plato's purpose. But the insight was lost, and the belief prevailed that in Plato 'Dichtung' and philosophy could be treated in isolation. He mentions Wilamowitz and Natorp, and for the rediscovery in more recent times Stenzel, Jaeger and Friedländer. Other names are mentioned by H. Neumann (*TAPA* 1965, 283 n. 1). One may add R. G. Hoerber in *CP* 1968, 95-105, especially p. 97 n. 42, and E. M. Manasse, *P.'s Soph. and Pol.* 56, for its continuing importance in the later dialogues. (Contrast R. Robinson, *PED* 84, and Jaeger, *Aristotle* 26.)

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already begun in the preliminary casual conversation or in the playful or serious imagery of the frame.' The philosophical importance of the literary and dramatic elements is not of course confined to the introductory conversations, and the need for a restatement of it may be illustrated by reference to Grote, who in spite of his general percipience could write of the *Charmides*: 'There is a good deal of playful vivacity in the dialogue. . . . This is the dramatic art and variety of Plato, charming to read, but not bearing on him as a philosopher'; and again, of the 'dramatic richness' of the dialogue: 'I make no attempt to reproduce this latter attribute. . . . I confine myself to the philosophical bearing of the dialogue.' It is admittedly possible for an over-subtle interpreter to exaggerate the philosophic import which Plato intended us to read into some light-hearted remark of one of his characters; but the recognition of the essential unity of a Platonic dialogue is something which one may hope will not again be lost.<sup>1</sup> None but Plato's contemporaries could enjoy the living interplay of minds which to him was the ideal, but in the dialogues he has left us more than an inkling of what it was like, and we shall never understand him if we ignore the warning in the Seventh Letter and try to turn their essentially dialectical (that is, conversational) approach into treatises 'like any other subject of study'.

This may aid us in forming a judgement of the scattered records of his 'unwritten doctrines', now being pieced together with so much care and skill. Some scholars write as if they gave us, in contrast to the dialogues, the real Plato, speaking of 'the things about which he was in earnest', whereas they are of course only the accounts of others who claimed to know his mind 'either by hearing them from himself or others, or discovering them for themselves'; and such people in his view 'understood nothing of the matter'. If in the dialogues he is not always at his most serious, the 'play' or 'pastime' of Plato is worth more than the earnest study of lesser men. It is the dialogues which down the centuries have inspired and stimulated,

<sup>1</sup> See Grote, *Pl.*<sup>3</sup> (1875), I, 484 n. i; 492. Friedländer, one of the most sympathetic and understanding of Plato's interpreters, has nevertheless not always resisted the temptation to over-subtlety in seeing a philosophical significance behind the lightest words of his characters. A stimulating discussion of 'Form and Content in P.'s Philosophy' is that of Merlan in *JHI* 1947.

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irritated and exasperated, but never bored, and when anyone, philosopher or layman, speaks of 'Plato's views', it is the dialogues that he has in mind. Whatever the motives of their author, for all of us, in Europe and beyond, the dialogues are Plato and Plato is his dialogues.<sup>1</sup>

Among philosophers Plato is as popular and highly thought-of as he ever was, but each age interests itself in those aspects of him which fit in with its own philosophical tenor. Without forgetting the influence of other trends such as existentialism, one may say that the prevailing tendency of modern philosophy, at least in the English-speaking world, is towards logical theory, in which such striking advances have been made that they have inevitably affected all the main branches of philosophy. This has led to a concentration on some of the later dialogues, whose purposes are mainly critical, at the expense of the more metaphysical parts of his writings. It has also led to a reappraisal of Plato's attitude to the doctrine of Forms or 'Ideas', usually regarded as basic to his philosophy: that is, the doctrine that what we should call universals have a permanent and substantial existence independent of our minds and of the particulars which are called by the same names. A critic today will sometimes refer to them as universals and no more, though Plato's language in many places makes it clear that they were much more than that to him. In the *Parmenides*, the first of the 'critical' group, Plato brings forward serious objections to the doctrine which he nowhere answers, and opinions differ on the question whether he considered them fatal and abandoned or fundamentally altered it, or retained it in spite of them. Those who, while respecting his intellect, regard the doctrine of Forms as a philosophical mistake, naturally suppose that he himself came to see this, and find proof of it in the penetrating criticisms of the *Parmenides*. Professor Cross illustrates the prevailing attitude when he speaks of 'the difficulty of giving any cash value to a phrase like "timeless substantial entities"'.<sup>2</sup> To continue the metaphor, one

<sup>1</sup> What is said above is not intended to belittle the work of those who are trying to recover some of the unwritten doctrines which has obvious historical importance, though the ice they venture on is sometimes treacherous. See further pp.     below.

<sup>2</sup> R. C. Cross, 'Logos and Forms in Plato', p. 19 in R. E. Allen's *Studies*. It should be added that Allen's brief introduction to this collection puts with admirable clarity the points that I have been trying to make here.

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might reply that it depends what currency you are using. By 'having cash value' the modern philosopher means something like being convertible into terms which have a straightforward meaning; but there have been philosophers in many periods to whom the phrase would seem to convey meaning as it stands. Indeed other scholars claim to see unmistakable signs, in dialogues which must have been written later than the *Parmenides*, that he retained the doctrine to the end of his life.

A dichotomy has sometimes been made between the historical and the philosophical approaches to the study of philosophers of the past, as if they were separate and incompatible. Such a rigid division can only do harm, and it is a mark of many modern philosophers that they are aware of the risk and have a strongly developed historical conscience. Thus for instance Cross (*l.c.*) believes that on the orthodox interpretation the theory of Forms is 'unworkable and...largely meaningless', and for this reason he is disinclined to father it on Plato unless he must. But he immediately goes on to state emphatically that 'the merits of the orthodox interpretation as a piece of philosophy are irrelevant to the question of whether it is the correct interpretation'. If it is wrong (as he believes it is), the evidence must be found in Plato's own words.

It is to be hoped that the days of antagonism between historians and philosophers are over. J. A. Stewart wrote in 1909 of the historians that a philosopher 'is, for them, a dead subject of anatomy, not a living man', and that compared with philosophers 'they are antiquarians, not disciples'. Of Stewart, on the other hand, Professor Allan has noted that his work was not only an adaptation of the Neo-Kantian Natorp, but 'he imagines that Plato had anticipated not only Kant, but Bergson, the Pragmatists, and the greater part of modern psychology'.<sup>1</sup> What has to be avoided is neither a historical nor a philosophical approach, but what Diès called 'a philosophy which usurps the place of history'. Far from treating his subject as 'a dead subject of anatomy', the historian or classical scholar pursues

<sup>1</sup> Stewart, *P.'s Doctrine of Ideas* 129, quoted by Diès in a good discussion of the historical and philosophical approaches, *Autour de P.* 352ff.; D. J. Allan, introd. to Stenzel's *PMD* xxiv, n. 1.

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his chosen method precisely because he wishes to bring him to life, to see him as a whole man, moving, talking and acting in the living context of his contemporary world, the soil in which his own thought grew and flowered. He can do this without belittling the contribution of the philosopher, whose interest in Plato lies rather in discovering what lasting contribution this ancient thinker has made to the advance of philosophy as a whole, and who rightly selects, and may interpret with special insight, what appeals to him most out of the inexhaustible riches of the dialogues. The two approaches are, and must remain, different, not however antagonistic but complementary, each imposing a salutary check on the other.<sup>1</sup>

As a historian I am glad to agree with Professor Dodds that 'Plato's starting-point was historically conditioned', and to continue my story from the previous volumes by introducing him as 'the child of the Enlightenment', 'the nephew of Charmides and kinsman of Critias, no less than one of Socrates' young men' (Dodds, *Gks and Irrat.* 208). The characters in his dialogues include Charmides and Critias themselves, and the Sophists Protagoras, Gorgias and Hippias, not to mention the revered figure of Parmenides, whom Socrates could just have met in his youth. Yet *child* of the Enlightenment must be taken strictly: he was not a part of it. Critias and Charmides, Socrates and the great Sophists belonged to an earlier generation. Socrates lived in Periclean Athens and fought in the Peloponnesian War in his forties. Pericles was already dead when Plato was born, and in his maturity he was a post-war figure writing in an Athens of different intellectual temper. When he put on to his stage the giants of the Sophistic era, he was recalling them from the dead.<sup>2</sup>

In thus making a start from the historical setting, I hope it is

<sup>1</sup> I have developed this theme in the lectures at Cincinnati published in *Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple*, pp. 229-60, especially the second. Cf. also the quotation from Cornford in *The Unwritten Phil.* xiv. Some remarks of Stenzel's (*PMD* 40) are also relevant: 'Such a complex structure as the theory of Ideas must necessarily remain open to various interpretations, since it assuredly contains forces of which the philosopher himself will only gain full consciousness in the course of their development. Any view or interpretation which tries with the help of modern concepts founded on separation and analysis to describe the unconscious syntheses of an earlier time, must feel that it is making a selection, dividing that which, in the eyes of the ancient thinker, could not really be separated.' (Trans. D. J. Allan, with omission of one word which is not in the German.)

<sup>2</sup> See also vol. III, pp. xii, 325 f.

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unnecessary to repeat G. C. Field's warning (*P. and Contemps.* 1) against the tendency to pay too much attention to history and forget how much of his philosophy arises from reflection on realities which are the same in all ages. The dialogues themselves make such an error impossible, and it is to a description and discussion of the dialogues that this book will be mainly devoted.



## II

# LIFE OF PLATO AND PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES

### (I) LIFE

#### (a) *Sources*<sup>1</sup>

If Plato's Seventh Letter is genuine (a question which will be discussed in its proper place among his writings), we are in the unique position for a writer of his time of having an autobiographical document outlining the stages of his development and concentrating on his part in a historical episode, the violent course of fourth-century Syracusan politics. If he did not write it himself, its historical value is scarcely lessened, since the sceptics agree that it must be the work of one of his immediate disciples written either before or shortly after his death. Such a source is of the highest value, even allowing for the probability that its overriding aim was the vindication of Plato's actions and their motives.

In his own writings Plato keeps himself firmly out of sight, and they reveal little or nothing about his life. He never writes in his own person,<sup>2</sup> and mentions himself twice only, both times in intimate connexion with Socrates, once to tell us that he was present at the trial and once to explain his absence from the group of friends who were with Socrates in his last hours. A number of his friends and pupils wrote about him, including Aristotle, Speusippus, Xenocrates, Philip of Opus, Hermodorus and Erastus, but their productions took the form of eulogies rather than biographies, and were already mingling legend with fact. In a school with a religious basis, such as Plato's Academy was (p. 20 below), there was a traditional tendency to

<sup>1</sup> A full account of the sources is given by Leisegang, *RE* 2342-7. See also Gaiser, 'Testt. Platonica', in *P.'s Ungeschr. Lehre* (separately printed), p. 446.

<sup>2</sup> This has never seemed to me to call for any particular explanation, but if any find it, as Ludwig Edelstein did, one of the most vexing problems raised by the dialogue form, they will find a number of suggested reasons, all somewhat speculative, in his article 'Platonic Anonymity' (*AJP* 1962).

venerate the founder, and even Plato's own nephew Speusippus is credited with having followed Pythagorean precedent so far as to give him the god Apollo for a father.<sup>1</sup> We also hear of lives by pupils of Aristotle, Clearchus (an 'encomium'), Dicaearchus and Aristoxenus. Plato was also a favourite butt of the poets of the Middle Comedy, from whom we have a number of satirical quotations.

All these early writings are lost, and the earliest extant life is by Apuleius in the second century A.D., who followed the earlier encomiasts in making his subject a typical hero-figure. Not much later is the book devoted to Plato in the *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers* of Diogenes Laertius, and finally we have from the sixth century lives by the Neoplatonic commentator Olympiodorus and an anonymous author, who carry the supernatural element to even further lengths. The most valuable is Diogenes, who, if his critical standards as a biographer are not what we would accept today, is nevertheless exceptional in conscientiously mentioning his sources, and they include a number of Plato's and Aristotle's contemporaries. Some of these are cited for sober statements of historical fact. He may quote Speusippus and Clearchus for the story of Plato's divine birth, but we also owe to him the knowledge that Plato's retirement to Megara to stay with Euclides after the execution of Socrates is vouched for by Hermodorus.

Not all who wrote about Plato were eulogists. In the miscellany of Athenaeus, a near contemporary of Apuleius, there are lively traces of a hostile tradition which did not hesitate to accuse Plato of such faults as pride, greed, plagiarism, jealousy, gross errors, self-contradiction, lying and flattery of tyrants. For these accusations Athenaeus cites a certain Herodicus, described as a follower of Crates but probably living little more than a century before Athenaeus, and the historian Theopompus, which takes us back to the fourth century B.C.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D.L. 3.2. (For other reff. not given here see Leisegang, *l.c.*) For the Pythagorean precedent see vol. 1, 148f. (Plato himself, in establishing his school, probably had the model of the Pythagorean societies in mind: Field, *P. and Contemps.* 34). Field (*o.c.* 2) remarks on the curious fact that the Greeks, who produced the first scientific historians, had little or no idea of applying historical methods to individual biographies.

<sup>2</sup> The attacks, which are quite vicious and absurd, occur mainly at Ath. 5.215 c ff. and 11.506 a ff. For 'Ηρόδικος ὁ Κρατήτειος see 215 f.; Θεόπομπος ἐν τῷ κατὰ τῆς Πλάτωνος διατριβῆς 508 c. (See also *RE* VIII, 975 f. and 2. *Reihe*, x. Halbb. 2185.)

## *Life of Plato and philosophical influences*

Theopompus, who wrote a work *Against the School of Plato*, was a pupil of Isocrates, and in view of the rivalry between Isocrates and Plato (p. 24 below) may have thought he was serving his master by these violent attacks. That such denigration was also current among the Peripatetics is shown by the astonishing declaration of Aristoxenus (*ap.* D.L. 3.37) that nearly the whole of Plato's *Republic* was in the *Contrary Arguments* of Protagoras.

In addition to the above, Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos in their lives of Dion say something of Plato's activities in Sicily,<sup>1</sup> and there are naturally a number of scattered references to him in later antiquity, especially in Cicero, and chronological information from Apollodorus.

### *(b) Birth and family connexions*

In all probability Plato was born in 427 B.C. and died at the age of eighty in 347.<sup>2</sup> His birthplace was either Athens or Aegina (D.L. 3.3). As to his family, in the words of Apuleius 'de utroque nobilitas satis clara'. His father Ariston traced his descent from Codrus, the last king of Athens, and the family of his mother Perictione was connected with Solon, who, as Field remarked (*P. and Contemps.* 4), might be of less venerable antiquity but at least had the advantage of having really existed. Plato had two elder<sup>3</sup> brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus,

<sup>1</sup> Professor Finley (*Aspects of Antiquity*, 77f.) wrote: 'Whenever later writers report anything about Plato in Sicily, as Plutarch does, for example, in his life of Dion, they take their information directly or indirectly from these two letters [Plato's 7th and 8th].' It would be difficult to substantiate this statement. Setting aside historians like Timaeus and Ephorus (Plut. *Dion* 35 etc.), Plut. also quotes Timonides, who, he says, helped Dion in his struggle from the beginning and wrote about it to Speusippus (Plut. *Dion* 35, D.L. 4.5). He was also a philosopher (Plut. 22), i.e. presumably like Speusippus a member of the Academy. I do not see why some of the information about Plato's activities should not have come from him. More important perhaps is ch. 20, where Plut. reports what 'they say' about Plato's dismissal from the Sicilian court and adds: 'But Plato's own words do not quite agree with this account.' (The ref. is to *Ep.* 7.349-50.) Nor did the story of Plato's being sold into slavery, which is told in one form or another by Plut. (*Dion* 5), Diod. (15.7), and D.L. (3.19 from Favorinus), whether or not it be true, originate in Plato's letters. Note how Plut., after naming the ransom at 20 minae, adds 'Other authorities say 30.' It is in any case amusing to note that E. Meyer used the fact that many statements in Plut. are openly drawn from the letters as a weapon *against* those who reject them. See Taylor, *PMW* 14.

<sup>2</sup> D.L. 3.2 quotes Apollodorus for his birth but Hermippus, Plato's own pupil, for his death in the first year of the 108th Olympiad, 348-7 B.C. Others suggest an unimportant discrepancy of two or three years in the date of his birth. For details see Ueberweg-Praechter 1, 181, Zeller 2.1.390 n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> From *Rep.* 368a it appears that they were old enough to fight in a battle at Megara, as early as 424 (Burnet, *T. to P.* 207) or else in 409 (Wilamowitz, *Pl.* 1, 35; neither gives reasons for

and a sister Potone, the mother of Speusippus. Critias and Charmides, who became members of the notorious Thirty in 404, were respectively the cousin and brother of his mother. Ariston, says Plutarch (*De am. prolis* 496f.), did not live to hear Plato expound philosophy, and after his death Perictione married Pyrilampes, who must have been her uncle, since Plato himself (*Charm.* 158a) calls him the uncle of Charmides. Plato adds that he went on embassies to the Great King of Persia and other rulers in Asia. From this marriage Plato acquired a half-brother Antiphon, whom he makes the narrator of his dialogue *Parmenides*.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to his reticence about himself, he enjoyed introducing his distinguished relatives into his dialogues, or mentioning them with some precision. Charmides has one named after him, and Critias speaks in the *Charmides* and *Protagoras*. (The Critias of the *Timaeus* and *Critias* must be his grandfather.) Adeimantus is mentioned as Plato's brother at *Apol.* 34a, and he and Glaucon take prominent parts in the *Republic*. At the beginning of the *Parmenides* we are told in detail that Antiphon is brother on the mother's side to Adeimantus and Glaucon, and that Pyrilampes was his father. From these and other references in Plato himself, one can practically reconstruct his family tree, and this suggests a considerable amount of family pride. Indeed, as Burnet says (*T. to P.* 208), 'The opening scene of the *Charmides* is a glorification of the whole connexion.' This has led many to conclude that family influence must have been responsible for instilling anti-democratic ideas into Plato from his earliest years. Burnet (*ib.* 209f.) strenuously denied this, claiming that the family traditions 'were rather what we should call "Whiggish"' and that Critias and Charmides were only at a late stage oligarchical extremists, and pointing out that Pyrilampes was a democrat and friend of Pericles. Burnet's remarks bring out once again the important point that the division between democrat and oligarch is by no means identical with that between plebeian and high-born.<sup>2</sup> As to Plato,

his choice). For the actions in question see Hammond, *Hist.* 368 and 413. *Apol.* 34a also makes it likely that Adeimantus was older than Plato.

<sup>1</sup> For full ancient references to members of Plato's family, see Leisegang in *RE*, x1. Halbb. 2347f. or Zeller 2.1.392 n. 1. On Critias and his relations with Plato, vol. III, 298ff. Genealogical tables are in Burnet, *T. to P.* 351, and Witte, *Wiss. v. G. u. B.* 53.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. III, 38 n. 1. Pyrilampes went so far as to call his son Demos. The note in vol. III, 102 n. 3, is inappropriate and will, I hope, be deleted from any future editions.

## *Life of Plato and philosophical influences*

Field's modification of Burnet probably comes nearest the truth (*P. and Contemps.* 5):

The rich and noble families which had accepted the Periclean regime and been proud to serve it, seem to have been driven in increasing numbers into the ranks of the extreme opponents of democracy by the financial oppression to which they were subjected to pay for the war policy of the democratic party. At any rate it is clear that during those susceptible years in which Plato was first coming to manhood those most near to him were becoming more and more hostile to the democracy and ready to go to any length to overthrow it.

This being so, the remarkable thing is perhaps not that Plato was imbued with anti-democratic sentiments but that he flatly refused to go along with the extreme and violent actions of elder relatives whom he had earlier admired, and could recognize the moderation of the restored democracy in spite of the 'mischance' of the trial and execution of Socrates. The only conclusion that age and experience brought him was the general one that 'it is very difficult to manage political affairs aright', and that 'all cities at the present time are without exception badly governed' (*Ep.* 7.325c, 326a).

### (c) *Early years*

Speusippus (fr. 28L.), relying, says Apuleius, on 'domestica documenta', praised his quickness of mind and modesty as a boy, and the 'firstfruits of his youth infused with hard work and love of study'. His education, like any other Athenian boy's, would be physical as well as mental, and his writings witness to a continued interest in the 'gymnastic' side. Dicaearchus (fr. 40 W.) went so far as to say that he wrestled at the Isthmian games.<sup>1</sup> No other information goes back to sources so near Plato's lifetime. Those of later centuries name his teachers of reading and writing, physical education and music, and speak of an early interest in painting and poetry. Whatever we may think of the story that after hearing Socrates talk he burned a tragedy

<sup>1</sup> This may serve to remind us of the unimportant question of his name, which according to some authorities was a nickname bestowed on account of his broad, stocky build (or alternatively the breadth of his forehead – or his style! See D.L. 3.4.); originally he was named Aristocles after his grandfather. But Plato was a common name, of which 31 instances are known at Athens alone. See the arguments of J. A. Notopoulos in *CP* 1939.

that he had written (D.L. 3.5), we can have no difficulty in accepting that the author of the dialogues showed early poetic gifts. We have indeed a number of epigrams, some of them both beautiful and touching, which have come down under his name and are generally accepted as genuine.<sup>1</sup> We must admit however that we know little of his personal life in early years, though we can if we like reconstruct his experiences and tastes from a combination of what is known of contemporary Athenian family life and education with all the evidence of his own extra-philosophical interests which is to be found scattered throughout his dialogues, and which makes their effect so much more personal and immediate than that of any purely philosophical works. This will not be attempted here.<sup>2</sup> Military service can be taken for granted, doubtless (considering his social status) in the cavalry, and he was old enough to take part in actual engagements in the last five years of the Peloponnesian War and later.<sup>3</sup>

The statement that Plato did not hear Socrates speak until he was twenty is attributed by Diogenes himself (3.6) to mere hearsay and introduced as part of the improbable drama of the burning of the tragedy. It is most unlikely that the young kinsman of Critias and Charmides had to wait so long for the privilege. Another early philosophical acquaintance is said to have been Cratylus the Heraclitean. Aristotle (*Metaph.* 987a32) says that Plato was acquainted with him 'from his youth', Diogenes (without mention of source) that he 'attached himself' to him after the death of Socrates.<sup>4</sup> There is probably some confusion here, especially as Diogenes (3.5) says that *before* he

<sup>1</sup> Diehl, *Anth. Lyr.* 1, 87ff. Most sceptical perhaps was Reitzenstein in *RE* vi, 90, but even he retained six, 'not because, but in spite of, the tradition'.

<sup>2</sup> For readers of German it has been done most fully and vividly by Wilamowitz (*Pl.* 1, 41ff.). Much of our information on family life and education also comes from Plato's dialogues, e.g. *Lysis* 207dff. and *Prot.* 325 cff.

<sup>3</sup> Not much reliance can be placed on D.L.'s statement (3.8) that according to Aristoxenus Plato went on three campaigns, to Tanagra, Corinth and Delium. If it goes back to Aristoxenus it has been distorted in transit, probably through some confusion with Socrates. See Field, *P. and Contemps.* 6 n. 1 (though Bluck indeed thought differently, *PLT* 25). These details are not very much more historical than the taunt of the malicious parasite in Lucian (*Paras.* 43), who claims that all philosophers are cowards and includes Plato in a list of those who 'never saw a battlefield'.

<sup>4</sup> Olympiodorus (*V.P.* 4), and the *Prol. in Plat. Phil.* following him, also put Plato's instruction by Cratylus after the death of Socrates. No doubt these statements go back to the same source. (See the quotations in Allan, *AJP* 1954, 277.)

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heard Socrates, Plato was a Heraclitean in philosophy. Aristotle is more likely to be right, but the chronological sequence is unimportant for the point which he is making, namely that Plato's two-world metaphysics was the product of an abiding faith, inherited from Socrates, that permanent and stable realities exist combined with a Heraclitean conviction that the whole sensible world was an endless flux of change and instability. Even after Socrates's death, Plato was only twenty-eight, and had another fifty years of life and philosophy ahead of him.<sup>1</sup>

Citing Plato's pupil Hermodorus, Diogenes tells that after Socrates's death, at the age of twenty-eight, Plato and some other pupils of Socrates withdrew to Megara to Euclides.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not they were in actual danger at Athens, they could not remain there happily at such a time, and at Megara they would be welcomed by some of their own intimate circle. Euclides and Terpsion of Megara were present with Socrates in his last hours and Euclides was later represented by Plato as the recorder of the conversation which forms his dialogue *Theaetetus*. One can easily imagine the liveliness of the philosophical discussions which would be carried on there, perhaps already on the relation between unity and goodness and the existence or non-existence of their opposites.<sup>3</sup>

How long he stayed at Megara we do not know, but before very long he must have been summoned to active service again, for he was still of military age and by 395 Athens was once more fighting in the 'Corinthian War'. However, of this our sources say nothing. 'Next' (after Megara), continues Diogenes with his usual lack of any pretensions to literary style, Plato went to Cyrene to see Theodorus

<sup>1</sup> On the relationship between Plato and Cratylus see D. J. Allan in *AJP* 1954, 272ff., and the reply by Cherniss, *AJP* 1955, 184-6. In the dialogue called after him Plato does not seem to regard him as a master mind.

<sup>2</sup> D.L. 3.6, 2.106. The sequence of events as given by Diog. is not very convincing. He says, on no express authority, that when Socrates was gone Plato attached himself to Cratylus and Hermogenes a Parmenidean, and in the next sentence, now citing Hermodorus, that *after that* (ἐπειτα) he went to Megara at the age of 28. Since Plato was either 27 or 28 at Socrates's death, this does not give him much time to cultivate the other two philosophers. (Hermogenes, the disciple of Socrates for whom see vol. III, index, looks like a mistake for Hermippus, as Allan pointed out. See the passage from *Prol. in Plat. phil.* 6.199 Hermann, which he quotes *l.c.* 277.)

<sup>3</sup> For the philosophy of Euclides and the Megarian school, see vol. III, 499-507, 185.

the mathematician, thence to Italy to the Pythagoreans Philolaus and Eurytus, and thence to Egypt 'to visit the prophets'. The visit to Cyrene is also mentioned by Apuleius. That Plato knew and respected the mathematician Theodorus of Cyrene appears from the role which he assigned to him in the *Theaetetus*; and Cyrene was also the home of the Socratic Aristippus, founder of the Cyrenaic school (vol. III, 490-9). According to Diogenes, the order of his travels was Cyrene-Italy-Egypt, but Cicero (*Rep.* I.10.16, *Fin.* 5.29.87), who does not mention Cyrene, twice makes him visit Egypt before Italy and Sicily. The order of his travels can never be known, and some, as might be expected, have consigned them all, with the exception of Italy and Sicily, to the realm of legend. In themselves they are natural enough. The Greek colony of Cyrene was in the fourth century a centre of mathematicians and philosophers, and Plato had personal reasons for a visit. A trip to Egypt, where was the flourishing Greek commercial city of Naucratis, 'pour un Athénien n'avait rien d'une aventure', as Robin says (*Pl.* 7). Plato's own interest in Egypt and its myths and stories<sup>1</sup> is of course no proof of his having been there, as Wilamowitz, who castigates the sceptics, freely admits (*Pl.* I, 245 n. 1); but neither is it evidence against it. It is of interest that Strabo (17.29), an earlier source than any of our lives of Plato though still writing over three hundred years after his death, on a visit to Heliopolis in Egypt was shown the places where Plato and his pupil Eudoxus of Cnidus were said to have lived.<sup>2</sup> To those accustomed to the ways of tourist guides this may not seem compelling evidence, but at least it testifies to a strong tradition among the Egyptians themselves that Plato had visited their land. The fact itself has no legendary suggestion, nor do the sceptics seem to be chiefly influenced by certain incredible accretions such as the presence with Plato of Euripides (D.L. 3.6), who was dead before 406, but rather by not very strong circumstantial considerations, e.g. that there is no mention of voyages to Cyrene or

<sup>1</sup> Egyptian matter in Plato is listed by Kerschesteiner, *P. u. d. Orient* 48, 49.

<sup>2</sup> Strabo speaks of being shown the houses (οἶκοι) of the priests and the διατριβαί of Plato and Eudoxus, which if earlier usage is a guide means not the houses where they lived but their customary places of resort. Cf. Plato, *Euthyphro* 2a and *Charm.* 153a. It has to be added that Strabo spoils his story by the gratuitous and impossible addition that the stay in Egypt lasted 13 years.



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Egypt in Plato's dialogues (!) or the Platonic epistles, and that the earliest mention of them is in Cicero: the oldest life of Plato, parts of which have been found on a burned papyrus from Herculaneum, mentions only the journeys to South Italy and Sicily.<sup>1</sup>

To lead up to these latter journeys, which were of greater importance in his life, something must be said about the development of his attitude to politics and philosophy, as he himself (or, if this is preferred, an intimate friend who knew his thoughts<sup>2</sup>) has described it in the Seventh Letter. As a young man, like most Athenians of his class, he supposed he would go straight into politics, but his early twenties coincided with the defeat of Athens and the oligarchic revolution leading to the government of the Thirty. 'Some of these', continues the Letter, 'were relatives and acquaintances of mine, and at once urged it on me as a suitable course to join their activities.' Being young and idealistic, Plato assumed that their aim would be to raise the moral standards of government, and he watched to see what they would do. Young as he was, the main lines of his character are beginning to show. Whereas most twenty-three-year-olds would have jumped without hesitation at the opportunity offered them by a Critias or a Charmides, he watched and waited; and what he saw of their excesses so shocked him that he simply 'withdrew himself from the evils of the time'.

It was not long before the Thirty fell, and under the succeeding democracy Plato again felt, though with more hesitation, the stirrings of desire to take part in public and political affairs. Inevitably there were acts of vengeance on political opponents, and others which he could not approve, but he acknowledges that on the whole the returned exiles showed considerable moderation. Unfortunately one of their

<sup>1</sup> Cic. *Rep.* 1.10.16, *Fin.* 5.29.87. For a full discussion of the evidence see Kerschensteiner, *P. u. d. Orient* 46ff.; more briefly Leisegang in *RE*, 2350. The evidence of the Herculanean *Index Acad.* (ed. Merkel, p. 6 col. 10) is of no value, since it contradicts the 7th Letter by putting Plato's first voyage to Italy and Sicily immediately after Socrates's death, when he was 27. In any case, no one who has looked at the mutilated text in Merkel, as distinct from the reconstruction, will be likely to put much faith in it. Cyrene is mentioned only by Apuleius, D.L. and Olympiodorus. (Kerschensteiner 47f.)

<sup>2</sup> 'In any event, if Plato did not write them [*sc.* *Epp.* 7 and 8] himself, they were written not long after his death by one of his disciples, possibly by Speusippus.' (M. I. Finley, *Aspects of Antiquity* 80.) No sceptic, I believe, would go further than this today, and history will not suffer if in the text I occasionally refer to 'Plato' as saying this or that.

mistakes was to execute Socrates, who was not only Plato's friend and in his opinion 'the most righteous man then living', but a man who had defied the wrath of the Thirty to befriend one of their own number when they themselves were in the wilderness. As he brooded not only on this devastating loss but also on the kind of men who held political control, and on the laws and customs in general, on the necessity of personal connexions for success and the growth of corrupt practices, the young man who had started out all eagerness for a political career felt dizzy and confused. He did not give up all hope of an improvement, but 'was always waiting for the right moment to act'. It is not surprising, as Cornford pointed out, that for such a man the right moment never came. 'The whole of this long letter reveals – what we might guess from his other writings – that his power and gifts were of such a kind that he could never be a leading man of action in the society of his time.'<sup>1</sup> His only conclusion was, he says, the scarcely practical one to which he gave expression in the *Republic*, that the troubles of the human race will never cease until either philosophers in possession of rightness and truth attain political power or those who have the power become 'by some dispensation of divine providence' genuine philosophers.

(d) *Sicily and the Academy*<sup>2</sup>

'This was my frame of mind', the letter continues (326b), 'when I first came to Italy and Sicily.' Earlier Plato has mentioned that he was forty at the time, i.e. it was about the year 387 B.C. He gives no reason for going, but his motive in the case of Italy was probably what later writers said, namely a desire to make personal contact with the Pythagorean philosophers settled there, and notably with Archytas the philosopher-statesman of Tarentum, to whose friendly relations with Plato the Seventh Letter itself bears witness.<sup>3</sup> The political instability of the Italian Greeks, and their conception of *la dolce vita*,<sup>4</sup> were a shock to him, and provided further food for

<sup>1</sup> Cornford, 'Plato's Commonwealth', in *Unwritten Phil.* 52.

<sup>2</sup> See especially von Fritz, *P. in Sizilien und das Problem der Philosophenherrschaft* (1968).

<sup>3</sup> For Archytas see vol. 1, 333–6; for Plato's motive in going to Italy, *Cic. Fin.* 5.29.87, *Rep.* 1.10.16, *Tusc.* 1.17.39.

<sup>4</sup> βίος εὐδαιμών 326b. The apt translation is von Fritz's.

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thought as he crossed to Sicily. In doing this, he himself seems to have had no definite purpose in mind, and later authorities were reduced to alleging a desire to see the craters and lava-flow of Etna.<sup>1</sup> The letter itself simply says that it was 'perhaps chance, though it looks as if some higher power contrived it to start the train of events concerning Dion and Syracuse' (326e). Once there, one momentous event in the visit so eclipsed all others in his mind that he mentions nothing else, not even the name of the tyrant Dionysius I. This was his meeting with Dion, then aged about twenty, to whom he became passionately attached,<sup>2</sup> a meeting whose fateful consequences were all in his mind when the Seventh Letter was written. Dion's connexions with the tyrant were close. His sister Aristomache was married to Dionysius, and he himself married his own niece, Aristomache's daughter. Plato describes him as a youth of exceptional intellectual and moral gifts, the perfect pupil to whom he could open his heart about his own political ideals. Dion eagerly absorbed his Socratic teaching of the superiority of virtue to pleasure and luxury, and renounced the lax habits of the Italiotes and Siceliotes – thereby bringing on himself a certain unpopularity in court circles so long as Dionysius I was alive.

Of the length of Plato's stay the letter says nothing, and the fact that his second visit occurred after the death of Dionysius I and the succession of his son is referred to so casually that one would never suspect that a gap of at least twenty years intervened between his first and second arrival.<sup>3</sup> There is a story not mentioned by Plato, but current in later centuries, that the first visit ended by his being sold into slavery by, or at the orders of, Dionysius, and ransomed either

<sup>1</sup> E.g. D.L. 3.18 and Ath. 11.507b. I do not mean to imply that Plato could not have been interested in such natural phenomena (*Phaedo* 111e and 113b suggest that he was), but only that if there had been any excuse to assign political motives these writers would surely have done so. Diod. (15.7), whose whole remark about Plato is an aside, does say that he was invited by Dionysius. To secure an invitation (perhaps through Archytas) would have been advisable anyway.

<sup>2</sup> Looked at in the setting of its times, I do not know why the last line of the epigram on Dion ascribed to Plato (ὦ ἐμὸν ἐκμήνας θυμὸν ἔρωτι Δίῳ) should have 'made critics doubtful of its authorship' (Harward, *Epp.* 17 n.). It is quite appropriate to the author of the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*.

<sup>3</sup> The passage 327b-d would itself be evidence that the letter was written for readers contemporary and familiar with the events alluded to, who could fill in the gaps for themselves.

by a Cyrenean called Anniceris or by unnamed friends. Details vary, but if the version is correct that the sale took place on Aegina and was effected by Pollis, a Spartan returning from an embassy to Syracuse, Plato's visit lasted only a matter of months; for this could only have happened in the period when Athens and Aegina were at war, i.e. not later than 387.<sup>1</sup>

In the next twenty years nothing occurred to alter his opinion that 'politics was in a state pretty well incurable without exceptional resources<sup>2</sup> and luck as well'. To see what was right for states and individuals was itself only possible after a rigorous education and an unbiased search for truth, conducted apart from the confusion and prejudices of active politics – in other words it was only possible for philosophers, 'lovers of wisdom'. If the only good rulers are philosophers, his duty in present circumstances was not to plunge into the whirlpool of politics but to do what he could to make philosophers out of himself and other potential rulers. The first task was educational, and he founded the Academy.

The Academy of Plato does not correspond entirely to any modern institution, certainly not a university of modern foundation. The nearest parallels are probably our ancient universities, or rather their colleges, with the characteristics that they have inherited from the medieval world, particularly their religious connexions and the ideal of the common life, especially a common table. That its foundation followed Plato's return to Athens after his first visit to the West in

<sup>1</sup> The *Index Acad.* (p. 16 n. 1) is usually cited as the earliest source for the story, but its fragmentary text is quite unreliable. Diod. (15.7) says that Plato was sold by Dionysius in Syracuse itself. Plut. (*Dion* 5) speaks of Pollis selling him in Aegina at the instigation of Dionysius but does not mention Anniceris, who comes in D.L. (3.20). Olympiod. (*V.P.* 4) tells the full story but transfers it to Plato's second visit with the younger Dionysius as instigator. (Full sources in Zeller, 2.1.414 n. 3.) It is possible that the story can be traced back to Aristotle. So Diels thought, because at *Phys.* 199b20 Aristotle chooses as an example of a chance occurrence 'the stranger who happened to come, paid the ransom and went away', a note obviously intended for expansion in the lecture-room. (See Ross *ad loc.* and cf. κατὰ τύχην παρὼν Ἀννίκερις in D.L.) Taylor (*PMW* 5 n. 1) counted it against Diels that Simpl. *ad loc.* (p. 384) 'supposes Aristotle's allusion is to some situation in a comedy'. But Simpl. is precise: ὡς ὁ παρὰ Μενάνδρῳ Δημέας τὴν Κρατείαν. Apart from the fact that Demeas was no ξένος but Crateia's father, Aristotle was hardly in a position to allude to Menander's *Misumenos*. Simpl. has added his own example: 'as, one might say, happens in Menander when Demeas frees Crateia'.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* 7.326a. This seems to me the natural translation, though it is not the usual one. Foremost among the necessary resources would be the 'friends and trustworthy co-workers' just mentioned at 325d.

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387 is stated or implied by the late biographers (e.g. D.L. 3.7). How long afterwards they do not say, but most scholars assume, as is reasonable, that it was not long.<sup>1</sup> The institution takes its name from its site, nearly a mile outside the walls of Athens, supposedly sacred to a hero Academus or Hecademus, and including a grove of trees, gardens, a gymnasium and other buildings. The sanctity of the place was great, and other cults, including that of Athena herself, were carried on there. To form a society owning its own land and premises, as Plato did, it appears to have been a legal requirement that it be registered as a *thiasos*,<sup>2</sup> that is, a cult-association dedicated to the service of some divinity, who would be the nominal owner of the property. Plato's choice was the Muses, patrons of education, not so much, perhaps, because he believed that 'philosophy was the highest "music"' (*Phaedo* 61a) as because a Museion or chapel of the Muses was a regular feature of the schools of the day.<sup>3</sup> The common meals (συσσίτια) were famous for their combination of healthy and moderate eating with talk that was worth remembering and recording. A guest is said to have remarked that those who dined with Plato could feel well on the day after.<sup>4</sup> He himself in the *Symposium* (176e) narrates how Agathon's guests agreed to moderate the drinking, send away the flute-girl and entertain themselves by each speaking in turn on a set subject; and in the *Protagoras* (347d) through the mouth of Socrates he pours scorn on the uneducated who need entertainment after dinner: educated gentlemen are capable of entertaining themselves, by 'speaking and listening in turns in an orderly manner'. Perhaps it is only in character when he makes Socrates add, 'even if they have drunk a great deal of wine'; for it was known that Socrates could take any amount without getting drunk (Plato, *Symp.* 176c). (There is perhaps a feeble echo of this feature of the

<sup>1</sup> Ryle is an exception. See *P.*'s *P.* 222ff.

<sup>2</sup> Wilamowitz, *Antig. von Karyst.* exc. 2, pp. 263ff.: 'Die rechtliche Stellung der Philosophenschulen'. I believe him to be right, but see also Field, *P. and Contemps.* 46f. For an excellent description of the situation and general character of the Academy, see Marrou, *Hist. of Ed.* 67f.

<sup>3</sup> Aeschines, in *Timarch.* 10. (The law prescribes the rules περί Μουσείων τῶν ἐν τοῖς διδασκαλείοις.) Boyancé (*Culte des Muses* 262) thought the *Phaedo* passage gave the 'true explanation' of Plato's choice of the Muses.

<sup>4</sup> The story is told by Plutarch (*Qu. conv.* 6.686aff.; cf. *De san.* 127b) and more briefly by Athenaeus (10.419c).

Academy in the one-time practice in our colleges of having an improving book read to the scholars at their dinner.) In the Academy the meals were conducted according to fairly elaborate rules. Xenocrates in his headship wrote some out, as did Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> Plato himself in the *Laws* (639c ff.) speaks at some length of the necessity for symposia to be conducted according to rules applied by a master of ceremonies who must remain completely sober. This passage and the *Symposium* should save us from a natural impatience at the time spent over what we are at first tempted to regard as the trivialities of social intercourse. The periodic feasts of a *thiasos* were in any case religious occasions with their appropriate sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> Plato and Speusippus, wrote Antigonus of Carystus, did not hold these gatherings for the sake of carousing till dawn, 'but that they might manifestly honour the gods and enjoy each other's companionship, and chiefly to refresh themselves with learned discussion'.<sup>3</sup>

Much of the instruction would be by Plato's favoured dialectical method, but he also gave continuous lectures, some of which were open to a wider audience. Aristotle, said Aristoxenus, was fond of telling the story of Plato's lecture 'On the Good'. Most people came to it expecting to hear some wonderful recipe for human happiness, and left in disgust when his discourse was all about mathematics and astronomy. Aristotle used to quote this as an example of the need for a proper introduction when one's audience is unprepared.<sup>4</sup> The lecture must have been given in the gymnasium, a public part of the Academy precinct where Sophists and others were wont to hold forth. Yet his own pupils attended too, philosophers in their own right, including Aristotle, Speusippus and Xenocrates, and wrote down and preserved what they could of it. So Simplicius says (*Phys.* 151.6, Gaiser *test.* 8), and since the story certainly goes back to

<sup>1</sup> Ath. 5.186b (vol. 1, 405 Kaibel): 'The philosophers made it their business to join with their students in feasting according to certain set rules. There were "symptotic laws" of Xenocrates in the Academy, and also of Aristotle.' *Id.* 13.585b speaks of νόμον συσσιτικόν written in imitation of the philosophers, and they occur in the list of the works of Aristotle (D.L. 5.26), who also wrote a book περί μέθης, the subject treated by Plato in *Laws* 1. (Ar. fr. 103 ff. Rose.)

<sup>2</sup> See Festugière, *Epic. and Gods* 25 and *reffi.* there.

<sup>3</sup> Antig. (fl. c. 240 B.C.) *ap.* Ath. 12.547f. I have omitted the inessential φυσικῶς, retained by Wilam. (*A. von K.* 84), for which Kaibel prints Bergk's suggestion μουσικῶς.

<sup>4</sup> Aristox. *Elem. Harm.* 2, p. 30 Meibom. Full text in Düring, *A. in Anc. B.T.* 357f., where see his commentary. Part of text with commentary also in Gaiser, *Testt. Plat.* no. 7.

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Aristotle its truth cannot be doubted. Yet it is a curious tale, and Aristotle and the others must have had better opportunities than this of learning Plato's thoughts on this central topic. Nor would one expect Plato to thrust some of his most difficult doctrine on a completely untrained audience.<sup>1</sup>

The subjects of study in the Academy may well have altered during what was probably a period of nearly forty years between its foundation and Plato's death. If so, we have no means of dating the changes save what we can infer from the content of the dialogues themselves together with whatever can be known or guessed about their own dates. Constant will have been mathematics (including theory of harmonics and astronomy) and political theory. These for Plato were inseparable, for we know from his own writings that he considered the exact sciences the necessary preliminary to the dialectical process which alone could lead to the final vision of the Good; and that ideally this philosophic insight should be attained before a man was fit to govern a state. It is reasonable to assume that the curriculum in the Academy was modelled on that which he sets out so carefully in the *Republic*. To produce political experts was undoubtedly his aim, but as in his early years so now, when (as he thought) his own role was settled as teacher rather than active administrator, the lure of pure philosophical theory was still at war with the sense of duty to society which he so vividly portrays in the Cave simile, where the philosophers who have seen the true light are sternly ordered back into the darkness to help and enlighten those whose imprisonment in illusion they themselves once shared but have escaped. Natural science was taught at some period, at least to beginners. In the famous quotation from the comic poet Epicrates it is mere boys (μειράκια) whom Plato was taking in a class to teach them the principles of botanical classification, and the class was held in the public gymnasium.<sup>2</sup> His own attitude to the study of nature underwent a change. The sensible world never ceased to be ontologically secondary, an impermanent and imperfect reflection of the intelligible world, which

<sup>1</sup> It was questions of this sort that aroused Cherniss's suspicions about the whole nature of the 'unwritten doctrines' (*Riddle* 11 f.). Cf. on this Düring, *A. in Anc. B.T.* 359-61.

<sup>2</sup> Epicrates fr. 11 (vol. II, p. 287 Kock); full text in Gaiser, *test.* 6, trans. Field, *P. and Contemps.* 38f. For modern bibliography see Balme in *CQ* 1962, 81 n. 5.

could at best be the object of belief, not of knowledge; but between writing the *Republic* and the *Timaeus* he had become much more favourably disposed to its study. The tremendous interest of Aristotle (and also of Speusippus) in biology must have been fostered in the Academy. The Epicrates fragment suggests the period when the method of division, first mentioned in the *Phaedrus* and copiously illustrated in *Sophist* and *Politicus*, was beginning to take precedence in his mind.

However, as we should expect of the author of the *Laws*, if not of the *Republic*, the primary aim of education for statesmanship never left his thoughts. It was certainly his intention that many of his pupils should leave the Academy for politics, not as power-seekers themselves but to legislate or advise those in power, and we have the names of a number who did so.<sup>1</sup> Best attested are Erastus and Coriscus, citizens of Scepsis in the Troad, who after a period of study at the Academy returned to their native city where they attracted the attention of Hermias the ruler of Atarneus. Under their influence and that of Aristotle and Xenocrates he studied Platonic philosophy, and adopted a milder form of government with satisfactory results.<sup>2</sup> Later, Plutarch states that Plato sent his pupils Aristonymus, Phormio and Menedemus to the Arcadians, Eleans and Pyrrhaeans respectively to reform their constitutions, that Eudoxus and Aristotle both drew up laws for their own cities, and that Alexander applied to Xenocrates for advice on kingship.<sup>3</sup> Eudoxus is a good example of the compatibility for a Platonist of political with scientific and philosophical work. His legislative activity at Cnidus is vouched for by Hermippus (*ap. D.L.* 8.88; that of Aristotle has been doubted), and he was at the same time a notable mathematician, astronomer, philosopher and (so we

<sup>1</sup> At *Pol.* 259b, he says that a man who understands the art of ruling, even if he holds no office, will rightly be called a statesman in virtue of his skill.

<sup>2</sup> The earliest source is Plato's Sixth Letter, which is probably genuine. Next come the extracts from Hermippus and Theopompus in Didymus's commentary on the *Philippics* of Demosthenes, Strabo and the *Index Acad.* See esp. Düring, *A. in Anc. B.T.* 272-83 and Wormell in *Yale C.S.* 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Plut. adv. Col.* 1126c. If anything, Skemp errs on the side of caution when he sums up (*CR* 1971, 28): 'It is difficult (except in the case of Erastus and Coriscus) to check the evidence for the sending of young men from the Academy into actual politics; but there is at least a probability that it is reliable, and that Plato personally felt this to be a responsibility.' For the evidence in full see Morrow, *P.'s C.C.* 8-9.



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are told) physician. It is also said that Plato himself was invited by more than one city to draft a new constitution, but refused.<sup>1</sup>

In connexion with Plato's life and teaching mention must be made of Isocrates, a man about eight years older than Plato who nevertheless outlived him, dying in 338 at the age of 98. The two were professional rivals, since Isocrates too had his school at Athens, founded a few years before the Academy, and both claimed to be teachers of *philosophia* while giving very different content to the word.<sup>2</sup> Isocrates's writings contain obvious attacks on the Socratic and Platonic conceptions of philosophy, and replies to these, or independent attacks, have been seen in Plato. Usually they avoid mentioning each other's names, though Plato once, in the *Phaedrus* (279a-b), speaks of Isocrates rather curiously. Taking advantage of the dramatic date of the dialogue he makes Socrates praise him as still a young man with the promise of a great future ahead of him, and a mind not devoid of *philosophia*. Nothing but later anecdotes is known of their personal relations, and anything else can be left until we come to the dialogues (chiefly *Gorgias*, *Euthydemus* and *Phaedrus*) where allusions to his teaching have been found.

In 367 Dionysius I died, and his son, whom he had kept in the background and treated like a child, suddenly found himself raised to the position of supreme ruler over the empire which his father had won in Sicily and Italy. His uncle Dion, having considerable influence over the malleable young man, persuaded him to send for Plato,<sup>3</sup> and himself sent a letter emphasizing the bent of the young Dionysius for education and philosophy and suggesting that here was the opportunity to realize the ideal of the *Republic* and create a ruler who was also a philosopher. In that work Plato admitted that those

<sup>1</sup> By Cyrene, Plut. *Ad princ. inerud.* 779d; by the Arcadians and Thebans for Megalopolis, D.L. 3.23 quoting Pamphila (1st cent A.D.). See also Friedlander, *Pl.* 1, 102, and for further ancient and modern ref. *ib.* 355 n. 27. Add Zeller 2.1.420 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The evidence for Isocrates's school is mostly from his own writings: he was not backward in speaking of himself and his career. It seems, as Field says (*P. and Contemps.* 32), 'to have been a purely personal connexion, without any permanent organization'. Isocrates charged fees and despised Sophists who charged too little. In founding his own school Plato did not take Isocrates for a model, but rather, one would think, the Pythagorean communities which he had met in S. Italy.

<sup>3</sup> On Ryle's chronological argument that Dionysius I must have been still alive to send the invitation, so that *Epp.* 3, 7 and 13 are wrong and therefore spurious, see Crombie in *PhR* 1969, 367-9.

in high places are particularly open to corruptive influences, so that the chances of success were indeed small. But, he pleaded, is it inconceivable that the son of a king or tyrant might have a philosophic nature, and once in the whole course of time might be enabled to preserve it? One would be enough, so we must not despair and dismiss the whole thing as pure fantasy (*Rep.* 494a-502c). It was not hard for Dion to shame the author of these words into returning to Sicily to help in the work of moulding the young tyrant's mind, but it is quite unfair to Plato to say that 'his chief motive was to put his philosophical precepts into political practice'.<sup>1</sup> That is not the impression given by the Seventh Letter, our only evidence for his state of mind. He was now about sixty, and had spent the last twenty years in philosophical inquiry and teaching. He was, says the letter, full of apprehension. He mistrusted the youthfulness of Dionysius, knowing, as he says (328b), the conflicting and changeable impulses of the young;<sup>2</sup> as well he might, having himself insisted in the *Republic* (498b) that immature minds were unsuited to the serious study of philosophy. On the other hand he had great faith in the judgement of Dion, now a mature man whose intellect he admired and who had shared his own inmost thoughts and aspirations. Perhaps Dion was right, and this was the only chance to train the 'one man who would be enough' (for the letter repeats these words of the *Republic*) before the flatterers and tempters of a tyrant got hold of him.

But more than anything else Plato was moved by that pathetic and mistaken shame which the naturally theoretical and contemplative spirit feels at failing to meet a challenge to action for which it is, in fact, entirely unsuited. This, and a feeling that to refuse would be a betrayal of his friendship with Dion who, he thought, might be in

<sup>1</sup> So Hammond, *Hist.* 517. See pp. 517-20 for the historical background to these events and a historian's assessment of Plato's part in their tragic outcome.

<sup>2</sup> Dion himself emphasized τὴν νεότητά καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν of Dionysius as a point in favour of success (*Ep.* 7.328a), as well as the educability of his other nephews. When therefore Plato goes on immediately (328b) to express his fears about οἱ νέοι and their ἐπιθυμίαι this must include Dionysius. He is believed to have been over 25 at the time (Bluck, *Letters VII and VIII* p. 85), and some have supposed him rather *old* to start on a course of study with Plato. (So Burnet, *T. to P.* 296, Bluck, *PLT* 36.) But it is clear that in both intellect and character he was backward and unformed. *Ep.* 3.316c speaks of him as ὄντος σφόδρα νέου at this time.

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actual danger from his enemies at Syracuse, constituted his chief motives for 'leaving my own not discreditable occupations and submitting myself to a tyranny which seemed unlikely to fit in either with my teaching or with myself' (329b).

On arrival Plato found a situation about as unfavourable to philosophic education as could be. Dionysius was surrounded by an atmosphere of faction and of slanders against Dion, who finally, four months after Plato's arrival, was accused of conspiracy and expelled from Sicily. For Plato on the other hand Dionysius developed a jealous affection, and tried to displace Dion in his regard. But the one course by which he might have succeeded, namely by putting himself seriously and willingly under Plato's instruction in philosophy, he could not bring himself to follow, and in the end he was persuaded to allow Plato to return to Athens. Sicily was at war (338a),<sup>1</sup> and it was agreed that both Plato and Dion himself should return when things were quieter and safer. Meanwhile Dion joined Plato and the Academy in Athens (Plut. *Dion* 17).

This, according to the usual dating, was in 365, and for the next four years Plato was once more engaged in philosophical activity – teaching and writing – in the Academy. Then Dionysius sent yet another pressing invitation, though at the same time asking Plato to agree that Dion's recall should be postponed for another year. Dion added his own entreaties, and all reports agreed that Dionysius was now possessed by a genuine desire for philosophy. Plato however was unwilling, and replied that he was an old man and in any case Dionysius had not fulfilled their agreement. However, the pressure was increased. As evidence of his zeal, Dionysius had collected some philosophers at his court, who held discussions with him on the erroneous assumption that he had already undergone instruction from Plato. In Plato's view (338d) he combined a genuine talent for learning with a consuming ambition to be well thought of. He now felt ashamed that he had not taken more advantage of Plato's previous presence, and

<sup>1</sup> ἦν γὰρ τότε πόλεμος ἐν Σικελίᾳ, *Ep.* 7.338a; πολέμου τινὸς ἐμπεσόντος, Plut. *Dion.* 16. Field (*o.c.* 21) speaks of this as 'a new war with Carthage'; Ed. Meyer, and later Leisegang (*RE* 2354), refer it to the Lucanian war which broke out in 365; Harward (*Epp.* 209, n. 73) thinks our material for the history of Sicily too meagre to allow anything but conjecture. If it was the Lucanian War, this would confirm the accepted date of 365 for Plato's departure.

feared that a refusal on Plato's part would look as if Plato thought little of his gifts and disapproved of his way of life. He therefore enlisted the philosophers to testify to the genuineness of his progress in philosophy, his trump card being Archytas, the Pythagorean philosopher-statesman from Tarentum. For Archytas and his circle Plato felt great respect and warm friendship, and he had himself brought them and Dionysius together (338d). The combined efforts of all his friends were too much for him, and he went back to Sicily for a third time in 361,<sup>1</sup> though all that the Straits of Messene now suggested to him was the awful perils of Scylla and Charybdis (345e).

Never can a journey have been undertaken more unwillingly. Dragged (as he says) by the envoys from Sicily and practically pushed out by the enthusiasm of his friends in Athens, he yielded to the old argument that he must not fail Dion or his Tarentine friends nor refuse to put Dionysius to the final test. So the third act of the tragedy began. 'At least', he says, 'I got away with my life' – an indication of the complete failure of the enterprise. First, he must test the mettle of Dionysius by explaining to him what philosophy really is and the range of preliminary studies through which it must be approached, concealing nothing of the time and labour involved, or the truth that it must be a constant companion and guide for a whole lifetime. Acceptance of this programme Plato regarded as the acid test of a philosophic temperament. In the event he was not even allowed to finish his exposition of it; so sure was Dionysius (the very model of the Ignorant Man of Socrates, who does not even know that he is ignorant) that he knew the most important points already from the pernicious instruction that he had imbibed from certain philosophers at his court.<sup>2</sup> Later he went so far as to write a 'handbook' (τέχνη) of his own, based, so he claimed, on Plato's teaching, thereby provoking from Plato the declaration which appears at the beginning of this volume (p. 1).

<sup>1</sup> This is the generally accepted date. 'When the sun was eclipsed on 12 May 361, Plato already had a lodging in the palace garden' (Wilamowitz, *Pl.* 1, 550, presumably referring to Plut. *Dion* 19).

<sup>2</sup> One of these was Aristippus (Plut. *Dion* 19), whose hedonistic philosophy would certainly not have been approved by Plato. For Aristippus see vol. III, 490ff. (At 490 n. 3 I followed Grote who, relying on D.L. alone, associated Aristippus's stay in Sicily with the elder Dionysius, but Plutarch certainly has him at the court of the younger.)

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Things went from bad to worse. Far from recalling Dion, the tyrant took over his property and cut off the income which up to now he had been receiving from it while in Greece. Plato tried to leave, but Dionysius soothed his anger with specious proposals for Dion's future and the part Plato could play in it. Let him wait till the next sailing season, and Dion would be grateful for his help. The hapless Plato asked for time for reflection and proceeded to weigh up the pros and cons in his usual deliberate way, only to conclude that in any case no one would give him a passage without a personal order from Dionysius and that, living as he did in the palace grounds, he was practically a prisoner. So he 'decided' to remain, and Dionysius proceeded to sell off the whole of Dion's property without telling Plato beforehand. From then on, good relations between them were at an end, though they kept up a pretence of friendship to the outside world. After further incidents Plato managed to get a message to Archytas at Tarentum, and his friends there, on the pretext of a political mission, sent one of themselves in a ship, who prevailed on Dionysius to let Plato go.

That was the end of Plato's disastrous involvement in practical politics. Speusippus, who had become friendly with Dion in Athens and accompanied Plato to Sicily, encouraged Dion to return and oppose Dionysius with force. Dion appealed for help to Plato, but this time Plato held firm. He replied that it was at Dion's instigation that he had formed ties of religion and hospitality with Dionysius, and that Dionysius, though he probably believed the allegations that Plato was plotting with Dion against him, had yet spared his life. In any case he, Plato, was no longer of an age to assist anyone in a war: he would help any move towards reconciliation, but if that was not Dion's purpose, he must look elsewhere for aid. Dion crossed to Syracuse with a force of mercenaries, fighting and confusion ensued, the city suffered slaughter and pillage, and the venture ended with Dion's assassination. Even after all this, such was the hold that Dion's personality had over Plato that he could not bring himself to blame him. If Dionysius had only restored his property, he said, none of this need have occurred, for his own influence could have kept Dion in check. And he wrote the extant epitaph on him, ending

with a passionate avowal of their former love, which tradition said was inscribed on his tomb in Syracuse (D.L. 3.30).

Our first conclusion from the evidence of the Seventh Letter and Plutarch must be that Plato was a born theoretician, and not the man to translate his own political and psychological theories into successful action. No one will think the less of him for that. The power of making a quick and correct judgement of men and situations, and of taking prompt decisions for necessary action in a situation where the leaders are being manipulated by others whose motives are purely selfish, is not likely, in any human being, to be found together with the intellectual profundity that produced the ethical and metaphysical theories, the achievements in logic, epistemology and ontology which constitute Plato's primary and inestimable legacy to the world. It should cause no surprise that the author of the *Republic* and even of the *Laws* was something of a political innocent, more at home drawing up laws and constitutions on paper than engaging in the rough-and-tumble of Greek political life; and Syracusan politics, even by Greek standards, were very rough indeed. By temperament he resembled his own philosopher in *Republic* 6, who sees the impossibility of doing any good to a society bent on wickedness, and stands aside like a man sheltering under a wall while a storm drives over his head. Harward was right to say (*Epistles* p. 28) that in a matter like safeguarding the interests of Dion 'Plato was a child in the hands of Dionysius, who tricked him at every turn'. Dionysius was not the worst; he wanted to have his own way *and* Plato for a friend. But there were schemers behind the throne bent on Dion's downfall and the frustration of his and Plato's plans for Dionysius, and for these too Plato was no match. His only mistake was in thinking that he ever could be, instead of holding back as he did at the time of the Thirty in Athens.

In this respect it might be said that the years had brought him no increase in practical wisdom. But the reasons why, after all the doubts and hesitations to which he was so prone, and which the Seventh Letter emphasizes at every turn, he finally accepted the call to action, bring out another, not unattractive, side of his character. It is commonly said that he seized on the opportunity to realize in practice his now developed ideal of the philosopher-king, or at least

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that he felt it would be cowardly to let even a slender chance slip by. The latter is true, but both the opportunity and the idea that refusal would be shameful were put into his head by Dion (*Ep.* 7.328e). What the story illustrates is the enormous importance to him of his relations with individuals, and the way in which a personal attachment could sway his judgement in public no less than in private affairs. As one reads the story it is obvious that Dion is the pivot of Plato's movements, that the fear of seeming in Dion's eyes to have acted unworthily of their friendship and his own philosophy was the reason above all others for his participating in the forlorn hope of reforming Dionysius. Then there was Dionysius himself, who must have had considerable personal charm, and who even after his quarrel with Dion seemed almost pathetically anxious to retain the friendship and good opinion of Plato. His character is extremely difficult to assess. Aristotle, in a passing remark (*Pol.* 1312a4), says that Dion despised him because he was always drunk, and there was a story ('They say...', *Plut. Dion* 7) that soon after his accession he 'drank continuously for three months', during which his court was closed to serious men or affairs and given over to drunkenness, mirth, music, dancing and buffoonery.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, a habitual drunkard could hardly have won the recommendation of the haughty<sup>2</sup> moralist Dion and still less of the philosopher Archytas. What is certain is that he was lazy, weak-willed, and at the mercy of advisers who hated and feared Dion. Plato, who had taken him up because of his devotion to, and absolute trust in, Dion, would only say, when finally convinced that he could never make a philosopher out of him, and when Dionysius had already appropriated Dion's property, that after all he ought not to be angry with Dionysius so much as with himself and those who had forced him to enter the Sicilian whirlpool for the third time.

The story of Plato's adventures in Sicily has often been told, and I had intended only to summarize it briefly. It seemed, however, on

<sup>1</sup> According to Athenaeus (*Arist. fr.* 588 Rose) Aristotle said that he 'sometimes' spent three months drunk. When Dionysius suddenly became his own master at his father's death he very likely did plunge into excesses, in which there were many at his court to abet him. But we need not believe in the literal truth of a story like Plutarch's.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ep.* 4.321b-c.

a re-reading of the sources to throw more light on his character than has appeared from previous accounts, and sometimes a different light. All this may be worth bearing in mind when we go on to consider his writings. A second reason for re-telling it in this volume is that in attempts to date the dialogues they are frequently referred to as earlier, or later, than Plato's first, second or third visit to Sicily; and the significance of such statements cannot be understood without some knowledge of the purpose and outcome of the visits themselves.

Little is known of the remaining thirteen years of his life. Both the Seventh and Eighth Letters were written after the death of Dion, and show him, though no longer an active participator, willing to advise the Dionian party provided, as he says, that they sincerely wish to carry out Dion's intention, namely, not to enslave Syracuse any longer to autocrats but to 'adorn and clothe her with the garment of freedom' (336a) – freedom under the rule of law. Let the victors select the best men from all Hellas and appoint them a commission to draw up laws impartially. Let them also (for here lies the only hope of an end to civil strife) refrain from all acts of vengeance and show that they themselves are willing and able to be the servants of the laws. In the Eighth Letter, professing to speak in Dion's name, he goes so far as to name a triumvirate whom he would like to see established as joint constitutional monarchs. Two other letters, believed by a majority of scholars to be genuine, testify to his continued concern for Dion until Dion's death, and his sensitiveness to opinion about his own actions in Syracuse. In the Fourth he congratulates Dion on his early successes, asks for more news, and reminds him that one in his position is under a particular obligation to act with justice, truth and magnanimity. The Third, nominally addressed to Dionysius, accuses him of misrepresentation and recapitulates past events in the form of an apologia for Plato's own conduct.

All in all, however, he was as he says (*Ep.* 7.350d) 'sick of his wanderings and misfortunes in Sicily', and once safely in Athens he presumably turned back with relief to philosophy and worked peacefully in the Academy with his pupils and colleagues. With Aristotle there, no longer a pupil but a member of seven years' standing, not



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to mention Eudoxus, Speusippus and other leading and independent intellects, there was no lack of lively argument. Much time must have been spent too on writing the twelve books of the *Laws*, which had not received their finishing touches when he died.

### (2) PHILOSOPHICAL INFLUENCES

Plato did not think in an intellectual vacuum. Some of his profoundest and most original ideas resulted from the attempt to solve problems bequeathed by his predecessors, in whom he took the liveliest interest. Aristotle speaks of Plato's philosophy as resembling the Pythagorean, but with certain features of its own. This is in the first book of the *Metaphysics*, where he is discussing the contributions made by previous philosophers to his own doctrine of 'causes',<sup>1</sup> among which he counts the Platonic theory of Forms. Its distinctive character, he says, it owed, first, to early reflection on the Heraclitean view that the whole sensible world is in constant flux and cannot therefore be the object of knowledge. Impressed with this, Plato listened to Socrates who had abandoned the study of nature for ethics but in that field was seeking the universal and directing attention to the importance of definition. Both views seemed to Plato right, and to reconcile them he supposed that the definitions which Socrates demanded must apply to non-sensible realities; for he thought it impossible that the common definition could belong to anything in the sensible world, since such things were always changing. 'Realities of this kind', continues Aristotle, 'he called Forms [in Greek *ideai*, whence our 'theory of Ideas'], and he said that sensible things existed apart from them<sup>2</sup> and were named after them.' Aristotle then goes on to make comparisons with Pythagoreanism whose accuracy is

<sup>1</sup> *Metaph.* A, 987a 29ff. I put 'causes' between quotes because Aristotle's term αἰτίαι is much wider, though there is no other convenient translation. When he repeats the account of the genesis of the theory of Forms in book M (1078b12ff.) there is no mention of the Pythagoreans.

<sup>2</sup> Ross on 987b8 (p. 161) says that it is difficult to supply εἶναι after παρὰ ταῦτα and it should be taken with λέγεσθαι. So he gives the rather odd translation: 'and he said the sensibles were called after these and were called what they were called by virtue of their relation to these'. In that case when we have παρὰ τὰ αἰσθητὰ . . . εἶναι six lines further on (and repeated later), we must take παρὰ in a different sense. I find this more difficult. At M 1078b30 and 31 he uses the words χωριστά and ἐχωρισαν.

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controversial.<sup>1</sup> I mention the passage now only to make the point that besides what we can learn from the dialogues themselves there is also external evidence for the influence of other philosophers on Plato's mind which may be worth examining and assessing. For the Pythagoreans we know also of the personal ties with Archytas and others which he formed and maintained on his visits to the West.

In the dialogues, there is no need to emphasize the fact that Plato's chief inspiration for the greater part of his life was Socrates. In the great majority of them he takes the lead throughout, even in the *Theaetetus* and *Philebus* which must have been written in Plato's late maturity. In this period however we shall have to consider the significance of a striking change. In the *Parmenides*, Socrates is a young man quite overshadowed by the elderly and revered Parmenides and though his part at the beginning is important, he is silent for four-fifths of the whole. In the *Sophist* and *Politicus*, which follow the *Theaetetus*, he gives place to the unnamed Eleatic visitor after a few introductory remarks, and similarly in the *Timaeus* to the Pythagorean Timaeus from Locri.

Of Presocratic cosmogonical and physiological theories Plato shows his general knowledge in the famous passage in the *Phaedo* (95 eff.) where Socrates says that to answer adequately the question of Cebes he must go into the whole question of how things come into being and perish. The influence of Heraclitus is seen in the *Symposium* (207 d) when Diotima describes our bodies as being in a constant process of change and renewal throughout our lives, affecting hair, flesh, bones, blood and all the rest.<sup>2</sup> *Cratylus* 402 a quotes Heraclitus by name for his famous comparison of the world to a river into which you cannot step twice (vol. 1, 488 ff.). At *Theaetetus* 152 e he is mentioned together with Protagoras and Empedocles as a believer in the genesis of all things from motion and mingling, in contrast to Parmenides, the only one who denied motion; and later in the same dialogue the Heracliteans are satirized as people impossible to deal with (179 eff.). Faithful to their doctrine they are in perpetual motion. They cannot argue, but

<sup>1</sup> Cherniss has questioned the historical accuracy of the whole passage. See his *ACPA* 109 n. 65, 180 n. 103, and 193.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. 1, 467 f.

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shoot out little riddling phrases like arrows, and there are no teachers or pupils among them, for each thinks he is inspired and the others know nothing. One is reminded of Aristotle's hit at Cratylus, who, he says (*Metaph.* 1010a10–15), was so overcome by the impossibility of arresting even for a moment the flux of change that in the end he found any speech impossible and merely moved his finger. At *Sophist* 242d (vol. 1, 436f.) Plato shows that he appreciated the full paradoxical rigour of Heraclitus's teaching, which most others missed.

The greatest single influence on Plato after Socrates was Parmenides, that giant of intellect among the Presocratics whose challenging thesis that by all rational argument motion and change were impossible had to be met without evading his apparently unassailable premises. I have referred already to the dialogues in which he, or an Eleatic follower, takes the lead, and in the *Theaetetus* (183e) Socrates refuses to embark on a criticism of Parmenides because he has always thought of him as, in the words of Homer, a 'reverend and awful' figure. There is no trace of irony in this description. Here and again at *Sophist* 217c Plato makes him refer to his (doubtless imaginary) meeting with Parmenides in his youth which is the subject of the *Parmenides*. Actual quotations from Parmenides's poem occur at *Symposium* 178b and *Sophist* 237a. Much of the *Sophist* is devoted to an examination of his use of the verb 'to be' solely in an absolute sense, with its consequence that, as he claimed, 'what is not' can be neither spoken nor thought of. The mischievous use by Sophists of the exclusive choice between 'being' and 'not-being' was satirized by Plato in the *Euthydemus*, where it is argued, for example, that to wish for someone to be no longer what he is (i.e. ignorant) is, after all, to wish him to be no longer, i.e. to perish (283c–d). In the *Sophist* he had to go to some trouble to show that 'what is not, in some respects has being', because 'is not' might mean only 'is different from'. The other way in which, at an earlier stage, Plato modified the harsh dichotomy of Parmenides was by introducing an intermediate ontological category between being and non-being, namely the world of becoming. Not having the status of full, unchanging being, it could not be the object of full knowledge, but only of *doxa*, belief or opinion. Nevertheless the 'beliefs of mortals' were not

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wholly false as Parmenides had claimed (fr. 1.30), but somewhere between knowledge and ignorance as their subject was between the being of the Forms and sheer nonentity.<sup>1</sup>

Since much of Plato's philosophy is unimaginable without the towering figure of Parmenides, it will seem surprising that he is not mentioned by Aristotle in his account of the genesis of the theory of Forms. A probable explanation, if not a justification, is that this occurs in his examination of earlier views on a particular subject, the causes of coming-to-be and perishing. That Plato investigated these he admits, but since Parmenides and his followers simply denied that motion and coming-to-be take place in reality at all, they must, he says (986b12-17, 25-6), be set aside 'as inappropriate to the present investigation of causes'.

The account of the Pythagoreans in the first volume showed how difficult it is to separate their philosophy from Plato's. The very word *philosophia* as Plato uses it is a link between them (p. 204) and his interpretation of philosophic understanding in terms of religious purification and salvation (204f.), his passion for mathematics as a glimpse of eternal truth (213), his talk of the kinship of all nature, of reincarnation and immortality and of the body as the temporary tomb or prison of the soul (311), his choice of musical terminology to describe the state of the soul (317 with n.) and especially the mathematico-musical account of the composition of the world-soul which he puts into the mouth of Timaeus of Locri (214), and finally his adoption of the doctrine of the music of the spheres in the myth of Er – all these are evidence of a close affinity between the two in which Plato must have been a debtor. In fact he turned to the Pythagoreans for help in solving the two most serious problems which faced him in his attempt to set the predominantly moral teaching of Socrates on a secure philosophical base. The search for ethical standards had led Socrates to demand universal definitions; but universal definitions could have no application in a world subject to Heraclitean flux. If Socrates was right, then, there must exist unchanging realities outside the world of ordinary sensible experience. The two questions which

<sup>1</sup> For modern attempts, like that of Vlastos, to deny to Plato any belief in 'degrees of reality', see pp. 493-8 below.

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this raised were, first, was there any evidence for the existence of such changeless truths? Second, if they did exist, how could we ever have any trustworthy knowledge of their nature? How is it possible for the mind to reach beyond the confines of experience and bridge the gap between the world of change and the changeless, eternal Forms? The answer to the first question lay for Plato in the realm of mathematical truth which had been so largely revealed by the Pythagoreans and, through the discovery of its application to music, was regarded by them as the prime cause of order and *harmonia* in the universe. In mathematics, therefore, as then understood, Plato had an example before his eyes of the existence of truth outside the empirical world. The statement that a triangle consists of three straight lines is true, yet it is not true of any triangle drawn by man, for a line has by definition length but no breadth and is therefore invisible. The triangles of experience only approximate to the truth, as a just action on earth approximates to the eternal Form of Justice. The modern explanation of mathematical truth as analytic or tautologous was not a possible one for Plato or any thinker of his time.

The second question was answered by a development of the Pythagorean theory of reincarnation. As he explains in the *Meno* and *Phaedrus*, our souls are immortal but subject to a cycle of births in mortal bodies. They spend more time out of the body than in it, and in the disembodied state have the opportunity of seeing the Forms direct and clear. The experience of birth and contamination with the body causes forgetfulness, but the imperfect sensible approximations to the Forms may stimulate recollection of the Forms themselves. To see things – whether moral actions, circles and triangles or instances of physical beauty – which are all imperfect, could never of itself, in Plato's view, implant in our minds the knowledge of perfection, nor could we abstract from them a standard by which to discriminate between them; but given that the vision preceded, they can start us on the road to its recovery.

In the *Meno* (vol. II, 232) Plato shows himself familiar with Empedocles's theory of sensation, and the physiology of the *Timaeus* owes much to Empedocles's ideas (217). Anaxagoras is criticized in the *Phaedo* (97b, pp. 274f.) and his discovery that the moon derives

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its light from the sun is mentioned in the *Cratylus* (409a, p. 306). Plato's relations with Democritus are a fascinating but tantalizing subject, for he never mentions him, yet it is impossible to believe that he was not acquainted with his work, or that, if acquainted, he did not react strongly. There were curious similarities between them. Democritus called his ultimate realities *ideai* (vol. II, 395 n. 2), though for him this denoted the millions of irregularly-shaped, solid physical atoms. These ultimate realities were beyond the 'bastard cognition' of the senses, and, like the Platonic Forms, accessible only to thought (462). This made him a more dangerous foe, but a foe he remained, for he committed the ultimate blasphemy of denying purpose in the universe and teaching a soulless, irrational mechanism. Plato must have had him in the forefront of his mind when in the *Timaeus* he put forward a mathematical atomism which could only be the work of Reason<sup>1</sup> and in the *Laws* castigated atheistic philosophers who attributed the origin and nature of the cosmos to chance.<sup>2</sup> Lastly, we have seen in the third volume how deeply Plato was involved in the arguments between Socrates and the views of the great fifth-century generation of Sophists. Protagoras, Gorgias and Hippias cross swords with him in dialogues called by their name, and together with Prodicus, Thrasymachus and others are frequently introduced or their views discussed. I have maintained that these characters appear as themselves, not as masks for Plato's contemporaries, but he is hardly likely to have ignored these although, except for Isocrates, he does not mention them by name. He is fond of expressions like 'a certain theory', 'some men', 'I have met many such', 'young men and late-learners', 'those who only believe what they can grasp with their hands', 'more refined intellects' and so on. Whatever his motive for leaving them anonymous, it is very probable that these phrases conceal controversialists with whom he was personally acquainted. Names that have been suggested at various times include Antisthenes, Euclides and his Megarian friends, and Aristippus.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. vol. II, 462, and for the dangers of supposing too close a connexion between Democritean and Platonic atomism see *ib.* 406 n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Laws* 889 a ff. See also vol. I, 144 and vol. III, 115 f.

<sup>3</sup> The possibility of references in Plato to the views of these three has been touched on in vol. III, 208-11 and 214 f. (Antisthenes), 498 f. (Aristippus), 506 f. (Euclides). See also the preface, p. xiv.

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This brief preliminary survey of the attention paid by Plato to previous and contemporary thought is intended as a reminder that the history of Greek philosophy represents, even in its greatest figures, a continuous progress. In this volume we are to study not a wholly new departure, but a climax, and it is essential to have the earlier stages in mind. This is not to belittle Plato. One does not impugn the greatness of an architect by naming the materials that he has used in the execution of a grand design, nor even, if he is a Wren, by studying classical and Renaissance architecture. In assessing the relationship between Plato and other thinkers, it is possible to be moved by a misguided partisanship, a feeling that to allow them any considerable influence over his mind is somehow to disparage his originality. In fact they provide important clues to it. This I believe to have been particularly true of his Pythagorean friends. Some critics would reduce Pythagoras to a kind of magician and his pre-Platonic followers to religious mystics with a set of irrational taboos and a superstitious reverence for numbers. On the contrary, their combination of religious with mathematical, scientific and political interests may furnish the key to the essential unity of Plato's thought, which we mistakenly divide into logical, metaphysical, scientific or political compartments. Awareness of this unity can only heighten our appreciation of the genius which achieved it.

# III

## THE DIALOGUES

### (I) THE CANON

Apart from the letters, Plato's written work consisted entirely of dialogues, all of which have survived. (Even the *Apology* has an element of dialogue.) Whether all that have survived are by Plato is a different question. Diogenes (3.62) gives a list of ten which were recognized in antiquity to be spurious. Of these the *Demodocus*, *Sisyphus*, *Eryxias*, *Axiochus* and *Alcyon* have come down in our manuscripts, together with two more not in Diogenes's list and named by their subjects, *On Justice* and *On Virtue*. There is no reason to question the verdict of the ancients or saddle Plato with any of these.<sup>1</sup> The others have a respectable pedigree, having been collected and arranged (on the analogy of tragedies) in groups of three at least as early as Aristophanes, head of the royal library at Alexandria in the third century B.C., and again in nine groups of four at or before the beginning of the Christian era.<sup>2</sup> The latter grouping is reproduced in full by Diogenes, and the natural inference from his information is that its contents were identical with those of the earlier groups. It is reassuring to know that the dialogues were in the great library of the Ptolemies, where they would be looked after by a series of distinguished scholars and critics. Copies would be obtained by the royal agents from the library of the Academy.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The apocryphal dialogues have been edited and translated by J. Souilhé in the Budé series (Paris 1930).

<sup>2</sup> D.L. 3.56-62, who attributes the arrangement in trilogies to 'some, including Aristophanes the grammarian'. He gives the contents of five trilogies and says the rest of the dialogues follow 'individually and in no particular order'. Publication in tetralogies he attributes to 'Thrasylus', usually if somewhat improbably identified with Thrasyllus the favourite astrologer of the Emperor Tiberius. (See on this man Gundel in *RE* 2. Reihe, 11. Halbb. 581-83.) I do not know why Grote and Taylor call him a rhetorician, but Longinus (*ap. Porph.*, v. *Plot.* 20) lists his name with others who have written on the principles of Pythagoreanism and Platonism. In any case there is some evidence that the arrangement in fours existed earlier. See Taylor, *PMW* 10f.; Leisegang, *RE* 2363. Most recently J. A. Philip (*Phoenix* 1970, 298 and 300) denies that the arrangement could have originated with Thrasyllus.

<sup>3</sup> By Demetrius of Phalerum according to Grote (1, 152). On the permanence of the library of the Academy and its bearing on the genuineness of the Platonic corpus see *ib.* 133 ff. and



## The dialogues

A few of those in the canon of tetralogies – *Alcibiades II*, *Rivals*, *Hipparchus* and *Epinomis* – were occasionally thought doubtful in antiquity.<sup>1</sup> None but the *Epinomis* would be defended today, nor are the others of any importance. The *Epinomis*, according to Diogenes (3.37), was said to have been by Plato's pupil Philip of Opus, who also copied out the *Laws*. Otherwise attributions varied, e.g. the spurious *Alcyon* was attributed by Favorinus (*ap.* D.L. 3.62) to one Leon, and by Athenaeus (11.506c) to Nicias of Nicaea. Nothing is known of either. In more recent times the canon was accepted without question until the end of the eighteenth century, but by the time of Grote it was set aside and each dialogue was tested by other testimony, both external and internal, as if its inclusion in the tetralogies meant nothing. 'Internal testimony' meant too often the arbitrary opinion of the critics as to what was 'truly Platonic' and what unworthy of the great man. Some of their reasons now seem no better than that of Panaetius the Stoic, who (if the story be true)<sup>2</sup> rejected the *Phaedo* because he did not believe in immortality and could not bear to think that Plato took such pains to prove it.

The nineteenth century did its best to rob us of some of the most valuable parts of Plato's work. The following have all been rejected by one or other of its scholars: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Hippias Major* and *Minor*, *Alcibiades I*, *Menexenus*, *Ion*, *Meno*, *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Philebus*, *Critias*, *Laws*, *Epinomis*.<sup>3</sup> Of these, opinion is still divided over the first *Alcibiades*, *Ion*, *Menexenus*, *Hippias Major* and *Epinomis*, but all scholars would agree that if we had to deprive ourselves of the others we might as well give up studying Plato. That fortunately

Field, *P. and Contemps.* 47f. (against Gomperz's denial of a library in which Plato's works were preserved). Grote is criticized by Zeller, 2.1.444ff. For the destruction of the Academy, including its library, by Sulla in 87 B.C., see Dörrie, *Erneuerung des Platonismus* 18f. J. A. Philip discusses the whole question in his article 'The Platonic Corpus' (*Phoenix* 1970). He argues for a 'more or less canonical Academic text', dating from the fourth cent., as direct progenitor of the one deposited in the Alexandrian library.

<sup>1</sup> For references see Zeller 2.1.441 n. 1 or Leisegang, *RE* 2365.

<sup>2</sup> For authorities see Grote 1, 157 n. 1. Zeller in a long note (2.1.441 n. 1) cast doubt on it, as have Robin (*Pl.* 30 n. 1) and others depending on Zeller's arguments. I do not find these as impressive as others do. For Panaetius's heretical denial of immortality see Rist, *Stoic Phil.* 184f.

<sup>3</sup> See Zeller 2.1.475 ff. with notes, and for the *Laws* 976 n. 2; for *Apology*, Grote 1.281 n. a (Ast), and for *Laches* and *Lysis* Raeder, *P.'s Ph. Ent.* 91 n. 2 (Madvig).

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there is no need to do, but there are some in the Thrasyllan canon which the majority of scholars after Grote, who defended the complete list (and his arguments are still worth reading), still reject as not by Plato. These are the second *Alcibiades*, *Hipparchus*, *Rivals*, *Minos*, *Theages*, and *Clitophon*.<sup>1</sup> All of them are short and slight, and the question of their authenticity is of no great importance for students of Plato.<sup>2</sup>

So far I have spoken as if the Alexandrian canon, traceable to the third century B.C., were the earliest evidence for recognition of the Platonic dialogues in antiquity, but this is to omit the oldest and most indisputable source of all, namely Aristotle. Bonitz methodically classified his citations of Plato under four heads.<sup>3</sup> Quoted both with the name of Plato (or in some cases Socrates) and the title of the work are *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Menexenus*,<sup>4</sup> *Timaeus* and *Laws*. Quoted as from Plato (without name of dialogue but easily identifiable) are *Meno*, *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Laws*. Similarly but with the name of Socrates (as the speaker in the dialogue): *Apology*, *Protagoras*, *Euthydemus*. Quoted by their title but without Plato's name are *Gorgias* ('Callicles in the *Gorgias*'), *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Hippias Minor*, *Timaeus*. There are also unmistakable references to particular passages in a number of these dialogues without mention of author or title, as well as to the *Politicus*.

### (2) CHRONOLOGY

Since Plato's philosophical activity extended over a period of at least fifty years, it is obviously important for students of his thought to determine, at least approximately, the chronological order of his writings if not their absolute dates. This is a difficult task, which in the past has led to wildly different results. Four types

<sup>1</sup> For the *Theages* see vol. III, 399 n. 1. Calogero and Friedländer accept the *Hipparchus*. See the latter's *Plato*, vol. II, 127f., 319 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For a fuller but still brief and clear account of the position (in 1926) see Taylor, *PMW* 10-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Index Aristotelicus*, *Arist. Opera* vol. v, 598ff. In what follows, the appearance of a dialogue under more than one head only means, of course, that it is referred to several times in different ways.

<sup>4</sup> *Symp.* and *Menex.* are referred to as τὰ ἐρωτικά and ὁ ἐπιτάφιος respectively.

## *The dialogues*

of aid have been invoked, which I mention in ascending order of objectivity.<sup>1</sup>

### (a) *Literary criticism*

Many scholars have tried to place dialogues in an order reflecting the progress of Plato's literary talent, claiming to judge the relative 'maturity of style', 'mastery of dramatic technique' or 'artistic power' which they display. Thus Taylor (*PMW* 20 and 235) argued that the *Protagoras* cannot be an early work because it is 'a masterpiece of elaborate art', expatiating on the brilliance and lifelikeness of its dramatic portraiture. By contrast Adam (*Prot.* xxxiv) considered that the 'dramatic fire' and other features of the dialogue 'all point to a comparatively early date'. The *Meno*, on the other hand, Taylor found 'crude' because of its abrupt plunge into the main subject of discussion. Apart from the fact that *Meno*'s opening question is dramatically perfect, conveying at once the youthful impetuosity of his character which is further revealed in inimitable touches as the dialogue proceeds, it is also true that on the whole Plato's dialogues get *less* dramatic as he matures. Nothing could be more dramatic than the opening scenes of the *Charmides* or *Lysis*, yet the one is agreed by all, and the other by most, scholars to belong to an early group. Plato began by giving vivid pictures of Socrates engaged on his mission, and as he went on became more concerned to develop positive doctrines. He retains the dialogue form, but it becomes less dramatic and pictorial and he allows Socrates to indulge in uncharacteristically long discourses only punctuated by expressions of assent from the others. Several nineteenth-century critics thought the *Protagoras* a work of Plato's youth, written before the death of Socrates, even (according to Ast) when Plato was only 22. To Wilamowitz it was incredible that he could have treated Socrates so light-heartedly after his execution, whereas nowadays the general belief is that the *Protagoras* was written a good many years after it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I omit the possibility of dating by relation to the works of other writers (employed e.g. by Ritter; see Diès, *Autour de P.* 246f.), the results of which are both meagre and uncertain. I agree with Field (*P. and Contemps.* 65) that 'this source of information had better be dismissed altogether'.

<sup>2</sup> For Ast see Grote, *Pl.* 1, 197 (who disagreed); for Wilamowitz, his *Pl.* 1, 149: 'This is how Plato knew him; but after his martyr's death, he had to portray him as the man who had

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In antiquity it was said that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue, 'because there was something youthful about the theme', and its happy, summery atmosphere and discourses on love have led others to the same conclusion. Schleiermacher would certainly not win the assent of any scholars today to his assertion that not only the *Phaedrus*, but also the *Parmenides*, bear evident marks of Plato's youthfulness. Stenzel (*PMD* 152) wrote frankly that 'the brilliant argument of the *Phaedrus* turns to ridicule all our ideas of chronology', on the grounds that, although 'an authentic Socratic dialogue', it contains manifestly later doctrines.<sup>1</sup>

Other examples could be cited, but these should suffice to show that those who profess to admire Plato's literary and dramatic artistry, and to trace in the dialogues its development from apprenticeship to maturity, are in danger of seriously underrating it. To any appreciative reader of his dialogues, it should come as no surprise that in his later years he remained capable of describing in vivid and sympathetic terms the joys and agonies of youthful *eros* – he who when over seventy could mourn for Dion 'who maddened my soul with love'. The comedy and entertaining portraiture of the *Protagoras* have led to directly opposing conclusions about its date. It is difficult to know what is meant by 'an authentic Socratic dialogue', but if it means one which has an authentically Socratic content, this, as Stenzel emphasizes, cannot be claimed for the *Phaedrus*, whereas if it only means one in which Socrates is the chief speaker, that is also true of the *Philebus* which is universally agreed to be late. The one literary characteristic which can be attributed to Plato without qualification is versatility, and to those who would pin him down to particular literary habits at particular dates he will always show himself as the swan into which (according to a Greek commentator) he once dreamed

achieved the aim of following only the Logos.' I know of only one scholar who today would put the *Protagoras* before Socrates's death (and that not for the same reasons as Wilamowitz), namely J. L. Fischer in *The Case of Socrates* 62 n. 4.

<sup>1</sup> On the ancient evidence (D.L. 3.38 etc.) see Thompson, *Phaedrus* xxiii–xxv. For Schleiermacher and others of his opinion, Grote 1, 197 and Raeder, *P.'s Ph. Ent.* 247. Some, while rejecting the absurd notion that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue, are still inclined to date it comparatively early on the same grounds as Diogenes's informant, the 'youthful nature' of its theme: they cannot believe that such a vivid description of sensual love was written by a man in his fifties! See further on *Phdr.* p. 396 below.

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he had turned. In his dream men were trying to snare him, but he flew from tree to tree mocking them, and no one could catch him. Nevertheless, the temptation to trust to one's own impressions in this way is, and will no doubt continue to be, irresistible.

There is however an interesting passage where Plato himself comments on his choice of literary form. The majority of the dialogues are written as direct conversation, with the names of the speakers preceding their words as in the script of a play. Some however, including some of the most important like the *Republic*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, are narrated. There may be a brief dramatic introduction in which Socrates agrees to repeat the conversation to a friend, which he does in the main part of the dialogue. This method has obvious dramatic advantages in that Socrates can describe the scene and the persons involved, but eventually Plato decided against it. The conversation which forms the main part of the *Theaetetus* is introduced as being read from a report which Euclides wrote down after hearing an account of it from Socrates. He explains, however, that he has not written it in narrative form as Socrates told it, but as an actual conversation, to avoid tedious repetitions of 'I said', 'he replied', 'he agreed' and so on. This reads like a statement of policy on Plato's part, and suggests that any dialogue in narrated form will be earlier than the *Theaetetus*. Since none of the dialogues which on other grounds are thought to be later is in this form, this affords some confirmatory evidence of their lateness, though it must not be forgotten that the majority of those believed to be earlier are also in direct dramatic form. It is interesting that the *Parmenides*, a dialogue which all agree to be closely linked with the *Theaetetus*, though some put it just after and some before,<sup>1</sup> starts in reported form with an elaborate introduction and the 'said he's' inserted (though very perfunctorily), but these are quietly dropped little more than a quarter of the way through the dialogue (at 137c) and never reappear. It looks as if Plato were already tiring of this method of composition, and ready for the change announced in the *Theaetetus*.

<sup>1</sup> For reff. to *Parm.* in *Tht.* and *Soph.* see below, p. 53 with n. 1.

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### (b) *Philosophical considerations*

As a guide to the relative chronology of the dialogues, these have a better claim to our attention than literary maturity or artistic powers, but they too have only a limited usefulness. It would seem natural that a philosopher's thought should display a logical order of development. He will obtain certain results first, and later build on them in working towards solutions of other problems, and he must tackle certain questions before he is ready to face others. He may also change his mind. To trace this development may be easy in a philosopher who writes, as most philosophers do, systematic treatises. It is more difficult to find it in Plato's dialogues, a unique form of literature not to be compared with modern philosophical dialogues like Berkeley's or Hume's in which the participants are lay-figures and the dramatic element plays no part. In any case these men wrote treatises as well. Plato never appears in his own person, and each of his dialogues is a separate work of art. In many the human element is paramount, and the argument is tailored to the characters, not vice versa. The *Protagoras* is the outstanding, but by no means the only example. There is a clash of personalities and viewpoints in which Plato sometimes seems more interested than in the conclusions reached. Indeed there may be no conclusion, and the character of each speaker may seem to be so individually drawn that none can be said to represent Plato himself. Doubtless Socrates comes nearest, but are we expected to sympathize with him throughout the length of the *Protagoras*? He too will adapt himself to his company, and use quite different approaches when he is talking to a respectful young admirer like Charmides or Lysis, a brilliant pupil like Theaetetus, or a formidable Sophist like Protagoras, or playing with the humourless egotism of Hippias or the fallacious cocksureness of Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. Apart from all this, the elements of religion, poetry and myth, and other features like the exaltation of a sublimated sexual love as the true gateway to philosophy, arouse very different reactions in different readers and render highly subjective any suggestions as to what Plato 'literally' meant (an absurd question, but one frequently asked) or what represents 'immaturity' and what 'development'.

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If we knew the relative chronology of the dialogues, it would be interesting to trace such development as they reveal; but the dialogues being what they are, we cannot reverse the process, as Field said (*P. and Contemps.* 64): 'It follows, also, if the dialogues are as described, that we cannot hope to work out a logical order of the development of the thought contained in them, and then apply this as a proof of the chronological order.' He points to the 'startlingly divergent results' which were attained by this method, compared to the relative agreement among those who adopted the more objective criterion of linguistic tests, and he describes it as a method foredoomed to failure because 'it involves not merely trying to impose a system on Plato, but each one of us trying to impose his own system'. This is too harsh. There is, it is true, one broad division between interpreters of Plato which will affect their judgement on this point: that, namely, between those who suppose that Plato's philosophy underwent such radical changes during his long life that his later dialogues repudiate the teaching of the earlier and those, who like the late Paul Shorey, insist on the essential continuity and unity of his thought. Shorey wrote (*Unity* 5): 'The attempt to base such a chronology on the variations and developments of Plato's doctrine has led to an exaggeration of Plato's inconstancy that violates all sound principles of literary interpretation and is fatal to all genuine intelligence of his meaning.'

Yet I cannot believe that the criterion of philosophical development, checked of course by any other evidence available, is useless in the hands of a careful historical scholar with no particular axe to grind. To take an obvious example, when in the *Parmenides* Plato raises grave objections to the doctrine of Ideas in the form in which he himself has propounded it in the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and elsewhere, it is undeniable that this is the result of further hard thinking on the subject and the *Parmenides* must have been written after these other dialogues. Again, we are surely right in detecting a change in Plato's attitude to the physical world, a progress away from the exhortation to avert our eyes from it, or use it only, like the astronomer of the *Republic* (529), as a first step on the way to grasping the unseen reality, the 'place beyond the heavens' where true being dwells

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intangible and invisible (*Phaedrus* 247c), towards a developing interest in nature for its own sake. In the *Timaeus* (30a–b) the cosmos and its contents have become the best work of the supremely good artificer, a work so wrought by reason as to be by nature as fair and good as possible. It is indeed realized in changeable matter, and cannot therefore be eternal or perfectly intelligible like the model after which the Divine Intelligence created it. The world of Forms still exists and is supreme, but had Plato still felt about the natural world as he did when he wrote the *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus* and *Republic*, he could never have devoted the careful attention not only to questions of cosmology and of the atomic composition of matter, but also to the details of an elementary chemistry, of the physical basis of sensation, and of physiology in general, which we find in the *Timaeus*.

Parallel to this change of emphasis in subject-matter we find a change of method. The use of hypothesis, as described in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, gives place to a procedure not altogether unrelated to it nor in conception novel, but elaborated and serving a rather different purpose. This is the method of division, mentioned with approval in the *Phaedrus* (265c–266b) and illustrated and applied at somewhat tedious length in the *Sophist* and *Politicus*.<sup>1</sup> It is a method of definition by dichotomous<sup>2</sup> classification in dialectical form, that is, pursued by two or more people in discussion. They first agree on the widest class to which the definiendum belongs, divide it into two by adding differentiae, choose one of these and divide again, and so on. Thus in the illustrative exercise in the *Sophist* (218eff.), the subject chosen is the angler. Angling is agreed to be a skill. Skills are divided into productive and acquisitive and angling assigned to the acquisitive. Acquisition may be by consent or by force, and so on. The goal sought by this method is obviously the *infima species*, which Plato calls the 'atomic form' because it cannot be further divided into genus and differentia (*Phaedrus* 277b, *Soph.* 229d). In other words the progress of knowledge is downwards, from the universal to the

<sup>1</sup> 'Division according to kinds' is mentioned at *Rep.* 454a and was a legacy to Plato from Socratic definition and perhaps other fifth-century sources (vol. III, 204, 439); but its elaboration in *Soph.* and *Pol.* is a new development.

<sup>2</sup> Plato prefers dichotomy, but admits at *Pol.* 287c and *Phil.* 16d that division into more than two may occasionally be necessary.



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particular, and the search ends with the discovery of that which is as near to the individual as possible while remaining definable.<sup>1</sup> In the heyday of the doctrine of Forms, the highest realities, and the truest objects of knowledge, were what we should call the widest universals, and the philosopher's progress was an ascent of the mind to a region as far removed as possible from the perceptible individuals of the physical world. Later, it comes nearer to the activity of scientific classification for which the Academy was ridiculed in comedy, and which Aristotle carried to such heights in his biological works; and it would be sheer perversity to suggest that the development was in the opposite direction.

Other possibilities could be mentioned, for instance the attempt to trace the appearance of Pythagorean elements in Plato's philosophy which may reasonably be thought to be the effect of his contact with the school when he visited South Italy at the age of forty. Results may vary in certainty, and in tracing what now seem obvious lines of development we may be unconsciously influenced by our acquaintance with certain results of dating by the stylometric tests to which I now turn.

### *(c) Stylometric and linguistic tests*

These rest on the assumption that over a sufficiently long period the style and language of an author will be subject to changes, some deliberate (like indifference to, or avoidance of, hiatus), some unconscious. The latter are the more significant, especially with an author like Plato who, as has been pointed out,<sup>2</sup> deliberately changes style from one work to another and even within the same work. The

<sup>1</sup> Stenzel actually says (*PMD* 24) that division is a method whose purpose is to determine the classes defined by natural science 'in order to bring individual reality within the grasp of science'. *Individual* reality is of course not within the grasp of science (a dilemma which deeply concerned Aristotle, e.g. at *Metaph.* 999a24-9; cf. Plato, *Phil.* 16e), but no less than Aristotle Plato in his later years seems to be trying to come as near it as possible. He does say in the *Phaedrus* (265d) and *Philebus* (16e) that division must be preceded by collection, i.e. a survey of related species to determine the wide generic form under which the definiendum must first be brought; but in practice (in *Soph.* and *Pol.*) he omits it, and the *summun genus* is treated as self-evident.

<sup>2</sup> By G. J. de Vries in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*, 10f. He gives references to a number of scholars who have uttered salutary warnings against too naïve a faith in this type of evidence, but recognizes its cumulative weight.

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method was inaugurated by the Scottish scholar Lewis Campbell in the introduction to his edition of the *Sophist* and *Politicus* (1867), in which by careful and patient counting he drew conclusions about the affinities of some of the later dialogues through a comparison of their vocabulary, grammar, sentence-structure and rhythm. There is, fortunately, one fixed starting-point, namely the *Laws*. This work is not only said by Diogenes (3.37) to have been left unfinished at Plato's death, and by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1264b26) to have been later than the *Republic*, but bears marks of lack of finish and revision, and is indisputably the latest of all his writings. The method was independently pursued by the German Dittenberger (1881) and then by the Pole Lutoslawski (1897), whose claim to determine the order of the dialogues with mathematical exactitude was somewhat overdone and led to criticism. It was continued with more circumspection by Ritter, who to silence criticisms by Zeller took a laborious byway and applied it with striking success to the works of a modern writer, namely Goethe, whose chronology was known independently.<sup>1</sup>

Success demands a meticulous and complete enumeration of the occurrences of words and expressions in different dialogues, especially unimportant ones like particles and brief formulas of assent, and this even with the help of Ast's *Lexicon Platonicum* was time-taking and tedious. It was natural therefore that the advent of the computer should have given a new impetus to researchers, and since the mid 1950s, computers have been used not only to compile accurate lexica and concordances of classical authors (an invaluable service) but to settle questions of relative dates and even authenticity. However, so far as our present subject is concerned we may note the pronouncement made by a worker in the field, in the course of a sober assessment of the possibilities: 'Even in the thorny problem of the order of Plato's dialogues the researches of scholars like Campbell and Lutoslawski have satisfied most scholars concerning the *general* order of the

<sup>1</sup> The literature on stylistic research is extensive. Works mentioned above are in the bibliography, and for the earlier period in general see Ueberweg-Praechter 69\*-72\*. Ritter's defence of the method (with historical survey) is in his *N. Unters.* (1910), ch. 5. Simeterre in *REG* 1945 gives a useful summary of the position at that date, and for brief accounts in English see Burnet, *Platonism* 9-12 and Field, *P. and Contemps.* ch. v.

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dialogues, though particular difficulties (like the position of the *Timaeus* and *Cratylus*) still remain.<sup>1</sup>

The generally agreed achievement of the stylometric or linguistic method (and it is no small one) has been to divide the dialogues into three successive groups. Between the groups some see differences suggesting lapse of time or possibly an event which could have had an effect on the writer's style, but the variations of opinion on a few dialogues suggest that they cannot be great. Thus some scholars put the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* in the middle group,<sup>2</sup> others in the late, while others are doubtful. In philosophical content they are certainly difficult to separate from the late group.<sup>3</sup> The *Timaeus* was universally considered one of the latest until G. E. L. Owen's attempt to redate it in 1953, since when it has been the subject of lively dispute. The position of the *Cratylus* is also doubtful.

With these provisos Cornford's grouping (*CAH* VI, 311 ff.) may be taken as representative of the generally accepted conclusions:

Early: *Apology*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro*, *Hippias Minor* and (?) *Major*, *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Ion*

Middle: *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Euthydemus*, *Menexenus*, *Cratylus*

Late: *Parmenides*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Politicus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Philebus*, *Laws*

As to the order within each group, there is a considerable measure of agreement about the dialogues in the last two groups, but more uncertainty about the first.<sup>4</sup>

With the dialogues thus sorted into groups by other means, we may note that the groups are also distinguished by a difference in philosophical interest. Group 1 concentrates on the moral issues and

<sup>1</sup> T. M. Robinson, 'The Computer and Classical Languages', *Class. Notes and News* 1967. This is a useful short introduction to the subject, with a bibliography including periodicals and news-letters. (Much of it is repeated in *U. of Tor. Qu.* 1967 in the course of his witty and balanced review article on Ryle's *Plato's Progress*.)

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Robin, *Pl.* 43; Field, *o.c.* 67; Kapp, 'T. of I. in P.'s Earlier Dialogues' 55. Kapp would also put *Phaedo* and *Symp.* at the end of the early period. The *Theaet.* shows a change of style towards the end, and Cornford noted (*PTK* 1) that the latter part could have been finished years after the beginning, and the *Parmenides* composed in the interval.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Friedlander, *Plato* III, 449.

<sup>4</sup> See the tables in Ross, *PTI* 2.

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search for definitions characteristic of the historical Socrates, in group 2 a metaphysical interest is predominant, whereas the first four dialogues mentioned in group 3 introduce a new note of criticism in both the ontological and the epistemological fields. Parallel with this goes the change in the position of Socrates which has already been mentioned (p. 33). In the early and middle groups (and the *Theaetetus* whose position between the groups is doubtful) he is the central figure, but in the last, with the exception of the *Philebus*, he takes no part at all in the main discussion, and in the *Laws* is not even present.

The stylometric method has undoubtedly proved itself. Ritter (*Platon* I, 230f.) gives impressive tables showing the chaos of opinion that prevailed before its introduction, as compared with the large measure of agreement now attained. However, this might be a good place to repeat the warning of two possibilities which should not be left out of account. First, some of the dialogues must have taken a long time to write. The composition of the *Republic* and *Laws*, in particular, probably extended over years, and other, shorter dialogues might have been written in the meantime. Secondly, there is some slight evidence that Plato was all his life an assiduous polisher and reviser of his own works. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in a rather unhappy metaphor, says that 'up to his eightieth year Plato never ceased combing and curling and every way braiding his own dialogues', and adds the story that after his death a tablet was found containing various versions of the opening sentence of the *Republic*.<sup>1</sup> That is all. It does not amount to much, and scholars have reacted variously to it. W. G. Runciman (*PLE* 3 n. 5) says that this 'traditional assiduity in revision' 'makes it dangerous to argue from the affinity of a particular passage with a passage in a later work'. Field on the other hand was scornful. After a description of the development of stylistic research he continues:

These stylistic investigations lend no support at all to the hypothesis, beloved of certain scholars, of second editions or revisions or rewritings of particular dialogues. It must be insisted that this idea is in every case a

<sup>1</sup> Dion. Hal. *De comp. verb.* 25. D.L. (3.37) repeats the story about the opening of the *Rep.*, which he says was related by Euphorion and Panaetius.

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purely gratuitous invention, introduced to bolster up the pet theory of some particular scholar which would otherwise be too much at variance with the evidence to be maintained.<sup>1</sup>

### (d) External evidence and cross-references

If a dialogue can be dated absolutely, or at least given a *terminus post quem*, by a reference in it to a particular historical event, or the relationship between two dialogues determined by a reference in one to the other, this is of course the most indubitable evidence of all. Unfortunately such windfalls are few, and the historical allusions are not always uniformly identified by scholars. *Laws* 638b mentions a conquest of Locri by Syracuse, which is generally taken to refer to the action of Dionysius II about 356 B.C. Since Plato would then be over seventy, this fits well with the other indications that the *Laws* was the work of his old age. The occasion of the *Theaetetus* is the return of Theaetetus, dying of wounds and dysentery, from the army at Corinth, and this is now<sup>2</sup> agreed to refer to the fighting near Corinth in 369. Since it is mentioned in the introductory conversation, which is represented as taking place many years after the main dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus, no anachronism is involved, but elsewhere Plato does not seem afraid of anachronism. The most striking example is the *Menexenus*, in which Socrates recites a speech which he claims to have learned from Aspasia and which brings Athenian history down to the Peace of Antalcidas (the 'King's Peace') in 386, thirteen years after his death. The *Symposium* (193a) mentions the dispersion of the Mantineans by Sparta in 385, though the dramatic date is fixed at 416 by the victory of Agathon which the party celebrates.<sup>3</sup>

These upper limits of date are all that can be fixed with certainty, though there are other conjectures more or less probable. To determine

<sup>1</sup> Field, *o.c.* 67 f.; cf. Thompson, *Meno* lix. Ross on the other hand (*PTI* 9) says Plato 'is known to have been assiduous in revising his works', solely on the authority of the passage in *D.H.* There is indeed no other.

<sup>2</sup> After the arguments of E. Sachs, *De Theaeteto*. See Cornford *PTK* 15. Zeller (2.1.406 n. 1) referred it to the Corinthian War of 394-87, largely because, on grounds of philosophical content, he thought it must have been written earlier than *Phaedo* or *Rep.* - an indication of how changeable opinion has been in these matters.

<sup>3</sup> See further p. 365 below.

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relative dates we have references to the *Theaetetus* at the opening of the *Sophist* and to the *Sophist* in the *Politicus* (284b). The *Timaeus* begins by recapitulating some parts of the *Republic* as a discussion which was held 'yesterday' (which it could not have been),<sup>1</sup> and the unfinished *Critias* is a continuation of the *Timaeus*. In addition one may recognize clear<sup>2</sup> references to the *Parmenides* in the *Theaetetus* (183e) and *Sophist* (217c). All these dialogues are comparatively late, and the earlier ones offer no convenient handles of this sort.

Naturally scholars have wished to relate the dialogues not only to each other but to events in Plato's life, notably the founding of the Academy and the three visits to Sicily. As one example of the results claimed, I quote Leisegang, who places them as follows (*RE* 2350ff.):

Before the first Sicilian visit: *Ion*, *Hipp. Min.*, *Prot.*, *Apol.*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charm.*, *Euthyphro*, 'Thrasymachus' (i.e. *Rep.* book 1), *Gorgias*

In next twenty years (the years of the Academy, between first and second visits): *Menex.*, *Euthyd.*, *Meno*, *Crat.*, *Symp.*, *Phaedo*, *Rep.*, *Phaedrus*, *Parm.*, *Theaet.*

Between second and third visits: *Soph.*, *Pol.*

After third visit: *Tim.*, *Crit.*, *Phil.*, *Laws*<sup>3</sup>

The upshot is that, largely thanks to precise stylistic analysis or what Campbell called 'quantitative criticism', there is general agreement on the broad chronological grouping of the dialogues, but the place of some individual dialogues is still uncertain and under lively debate. We are left with the practical problem of the best order of treatment, and one can hardly do better than follow a rule which

<sup>1</sup> The occasion of each is marked by reference to a particular festival (*Rep.* 354a, *Tim.* 21a; cf. Cornford, *PTK* 4f.), and the festivals were not on successive days. Apart from the change in *dramatis personae*, it looks as if by this device too Plato is emphasizing the fictitious character of the connexion.

<sup>2</sup> Clear to me at least, and I am glad to have some support. Cornford (*P.'s Cosm.* 1) wrote that the passages in *Th.* and *Soph.* are 'in terms which can only refer to the *Parmenides*'. Also the arguments at 244b ff. appear to assume familiarity with those in the *Parm.* (*ib.* 226). On the other hand 4 out of the 5 scholars cited in Ross's table (*PTI* 2) put *Parm.* later than *Th.*, though all put it before *Soph.*

<sup>3</sup> I choose Leisegang's grouping as the most generally probable. Ross (*PTI* 10) relates selected dialogues to the Sicilian visits in a way which agrees with it, except that he puts the *Meno* before the first visit. A different picture is given by Erbse in *Hermes* 1968, p. 22 (following Kapp).

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'combines a general respect for chronology with convenience of exposition'.<sup>1</sup> To act on the hypothesis that Plato's thought developed in certain directions rather than otherwise is unavoidable. If a certain amount of subjectivity must enter into this, at least the achievements of the stylometrists have set limits to it, which save one from the grosser errors. The date of each dialogue will be more fully discussed in its own section.

### APPENDIX

#### *Did Plato write any dialogues before the death of Socrates?*

This question is probably unanswerable, but since it interests a number of people I append a few of the many opinions expressed, sufficient, I hope, to give an idea of the typical arguments involved.

There is no ancient evidence except the apocryphal anecdote in Diogenes Laertius (3.35) that Socrates heard Plato read the *Lysis* and commented, 'By Heracles, what a lot of lies the young man tells about me!' That some of the dialogues were written before the trial and death of Socrates was commonly taken for granted in the nineteenth century before Grote (1875), who cites Schleiermacher, Socher, Hermann, Stallbaum, Steinhart, Susemihl and Ueberweg.<sup>2</sup> Grote himself strongly opposed this view.<sup>3</sup> He pointed first to the unlikelihood of any follower writing and publishing conversations of Socrates in his lifetime, whether genuine (which would be superfluous, since anyone could hear Socrates himself at any time) or fictitious (which in a pupil would be an unwarrantable liberty). As to Plato, up to the death of Socrates he was deeply involved in the troubled history of his time, the Peloponnesian War and the horrors that marked its end in Athens, and moreover (evidence of *Ep.* 7) was still looking to a political career. He followed Socrates like many other ambitious young men, through admiration of his powers of argument and in the hope of acquiring the same facility. (Grote might also have mentioned the sheer magnetism of his personality.) What turned Plato to philosophy and literary composition was his final disillusionment with politics and the tragedy of Socrates's execution.

Adam in 1893 (*Protagoras* xxxiv) thought it 'unlikely on many grounds that any of Plato's dialogues are anterior to the death of Socrates', and

<sup>1</sup> The words are M. J. O'Brien's, *Socr. Paradoxes* 83.

<sup>2</sup> Grote, *Pl.* I, ch. v, especially 178 ff. On p. 196, n. k, he mentions three dissentients.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.* 196-204.

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Thompson (*Meno* xxxi, 1901) declared himself convinced by Grote's arguments, and added: 'For the conception of the Socrates of the dialogues a certain mythical atmosphere is required, which readily gathered at no long interval after his death, but which would have been as impossible during his life-time as the appearance of his ghost.'

Wilamowitz (1920) and Ritter (first in 1888) both thought that some dialogues must have preceded Socrates's death because they portray him in a mischievous and all-too-human guise which would have been impossible after it. An example from Wilamowitz occurs on p. 42 above, and in his *Kerngedanken* (1931)<sup>1</sup> Ritter found it 'unthinkable that the *Lesser Hippias* could have been written after the distressing accusations against Socrates', because the ordinary reader must consider him in that dialogue 'the worst pettifogger and twister of words, the worst of all Sophist babblers'. So much for Thompson's 'mythical atmosphere'.

For A. E. Taylor (*PMW* 21, 1926), Plato's literary activity could not have begun before the death of Socrates. The idea of Plato "'dramatizing"' the sayings and doings of the living man, whom he revered above all others, is absurd, and the original motive of all the Socratic *logoi* was to preserve his memory. Field (*P. and Contemps.* 74, 1930) was of the same opinion:

'It really seems impossible, in spite of the opinion of some undoubted authorities, to make any convincing account of motives that could lead Plato to compose any of them while Socrates was still alive. It was clearly the effect of Socrates's death which turned Plato from ambitions for an active political life to the state of mind which would find its expression in writings of this kind. Added to which is the fact that some of the dialogues which imply the death of Socrates – the *Crito* for instance – bear all the marks of being his earliest productions.'

But Friedländer at the same time<sup>2</sup> thought differently. He had been arguing that certain dialogues (including *Laches* and *Charmides*) preceded the *Euthyphro*, *Apology* and *Crito* which are concerned with Socrates's trial, and it seemed to him unreasonable that Plato should have written them after 399 and only later approached the subject of the trial and execution. 'It makes much more sense to assume that Plato's first writings date from before the end of the fifth century.' Neither Robin (*Pl.* (1935) 40) nor Ross (*PTI* (1951) 4) thought this impossible, and Ross considered Taylor's psychological arguments unconvincing.

<sup>1</sup> See the English version (*Essence* pp. 28 and 39 n.), and earlier his *Platon* 1, 56.

<sup>2</sup> *Die plat. Schr.* 1930. See the English translation, *Plato* 111, 456.



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Two examples, both dated 1969, will show that the question is still open. J. L. Fischer starts from a belief that Plato was 18 when he first met Socrates, and that he had already started to write. (This presumably refers to the early poetic and dramatic compositions mentioned by Diogenes, 3.5.) And he cannot accept the assumption that, having made a start and being a writer all his life, Plato did nothing for the next ten years but listen to Socratic conversations, whether from Socrates's own mouth or as repeated by others from written notes. It would, he says, be more logical to assume that no small part of these 'notes' was made up of Plato's dialogues. By contrast E. N. Tigerstedt says briefly: '*Pace* Wilamowitz and Friedländer, I cannot imagine Plato – or anybody else of Socrates' disciples, – writing a "Socratic dialogue", whilst the living Master was walking and talking in the streets of Athens.'<sup>1</sup>

It will be seen that most of the arguments on either side are highly subjective. If certainty is impossible, I am inclined to side with Grote and his successors, not so much on psychological grounds (though I would agree that they support the negative conclusion) as on the historical grounds which Grote adduced, and above all the evidence of the Seventh Letter for Plato's preoccupations up to the death of Socrates and the effect of this event itself in finally converting him from political ambitions to the life of philosophy.

### (3) PHILOSOPHICAL STATUS: PLAY AND EARNEST

Creativity and play are close together.

C. G. Jung

You must see that in a sense all science, all human thought, is a form of play.

J. Bionowski

The question whether Plato himself regarded the dialogues as a medium for the communication of serious philosophy, and what, in consequence, should be our own attitude towards them, calls for something more than the brief mention it received in the introduction. This opened with a quotation from the Seventh Letter suggesting that philosophy can only be seriously pursued through oral discussion and living companionship, and that written works on the subject

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Fischer, *Case of Socrates* 29, and E. N. Tigerstedt, *P.'s Idea of Poetical Inspiration* 18 n. 39.

### *Philosophical status: play and earnest*

were of little or no value.<sup>1</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, whose ostensible subject is oratory, Plato develops this theme (274bff.). The Egyptian god Theuth, inventor of writing, commanded the king to teach it to the people, as a means of making them cleverer and improving their memories. The wise king, however, saw that on the contrary it would weaken memories through disuse, and that reliance on it would produce men with the pretence of knowledge but not the reality, full of second-hand ideas which they had not thought out for themselves. The writer and readers of a written manual<sup>2</sup> are pretty foolish if they expect it to yield any illumination or certainty. It can only jog the memory of someone who already knows its subject. The written word can answer no questions, it gets into anybody's hands and cannot choose the hearers who will profit by it; so it gets misunderstood and abused, and is incapable of defending itself.

By contrast, Socrates continues (276a), consider its legitimate brother, the living word which is written with knowledge in the soul of the learner, which can defend itself, and speak or be silent as is fitting. This is the reality of which writing is the phantom. When the philosopher writes, the man, that is, with a knowledge of what is right and fine and good, he will do so for recreation, or to assist the memory of himself in old age or of whoever 'follows the same trail'. That will be his pastime, as other men choose drinking-parties or the like. 'But a magnificent pastime', exclaims Phaedrus, 'whereas the others are worthless!' Maybe so, but it is much better to treat the same things seriously through the art of discussion (διαλεκτική), choosing the right sort of mind and implanting in it words based on knowledge, strong enough to defend themselves and their author and to bear fruit in others. An author who claims lasting merit for his productions just cannot tell the difference between dream and reality: the example to follow is the man who believes that every written book contains much triviality, and that nothing ever written in verse or prose is worth much serious attention.

<sup>1</sup> It must be remembered that, if genuine, this occurred in a *letter*. It is not a conclusion reached after due reflection in the study, but an outburst of irritation occasioned by the conduct of Plato's wayward young pupil Dionysius II of Syracuse. (Tigerstedt, *P.'s Idea of Poet. Insp.* 9.)

<sup>2</sup> *Technē*. For this use of the word see vol. III, 44 with note 4, 125, 128.

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These are strong words, and suggested to Crombie that Plato saw his own dialogues as a harmless though not very exalted pastime like philately (*EPD* 1, 148). This however is not an easy thing to believe of the author of the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, to say nothing of the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*; and what immediately follows in the *Phaedrus* itself does a little to mitigate the censure. To conclude then, says Socrates (278b), our message to all prose-writers, poets and lawmakers must be this: If they wrote with knowledge of the truth, if they can face a challenge and defend their work, and out of their own mouth demonstrate the inferiority of the written word, we must not call them by the name which their writings suggest but hail them as philosophers.

To appreciate Plato's position, we must first of all forget our own world, with its public and private libraries and its publishers churning out many thousands of books every year, and think ourselves back to a time when oral delivery still retained a certain priority over the written word.<sup>1</sup> Writing was considered as an aid to speaking rather than a substitute for it. Homer, lyric, tragedy and oratory were only written down in order to be memorized and sung or spoken. By Plato's time the position was already changing, and at this transitional stage the relationship between spoken and written *logos* became a subject of lively argument. Herodotus and Thucydides had written their histories, and philosophers like Anaxagoras and Democritus their treatises, but reading aloud, whether to oneself or others, was still the normal practice. Thucydides (1.22) expresses a fear that the austerity of his work may make it less pleasant *to listen to*, and Socrates (*Phaedo* 97b-c) describes the effect of *hearing* someone reading from a book of Anaxagoras.<sup>2</sup> More relevant is the evidence of a controversy, in Plato's own time, between the upholders of the spoken and of the written word. With Plato's rival Isocrates oratory itself became a purely written medium. Though a trainer of orators, he was himself a nervous and feeble speaker, and wrote in the form of public speeches

<sup>1</sup> The point has been well made by Friedlander, *Pl.* 1, 109ff., who however perhaps exaggerates it by leaving out any reference to Thucydides or the lost writings of the Presocratics.

<sup>2</sup> Thuc. 1.22; Plato, *Phaedo* 97b-c. Cf. vol. III, 42f. Even the self-conscious claim of Thucydides that he intends his work to be a lasting possession, rather than a competition-piece to be heard only once, suggests an awareness that he is composing in a novel genre.

## *Philosophical status: play and earnest*

what were exercises, political tracts, or an apologia for his own life. Opposed to him was Alcidas, who maintained that speeches should not be written down at all, even for subsequent delivery, but should be improvised as the *kairos* of the moment demanded.<sup>1</sup> This he argued in a work *On those who compose written speeches* which has survived, and there are striking resemblances between its language and that of the *Phaedrus*, too close to be fortuitous. They show Plato to have been deeply concerned with this current controversy,<sup>2</sup> which for him as a writer of dialogues had an obvious practical urgency. If it was being carried on mainly in the field of oratory, we have only to remember that oratory is the declared subject of the *Phaedrus*. Finally we have to remember the sheer physical inconveniences of using ancient books (that is, papyrus rolls): lack of punctuation, paragraphing, indexes and even spaces between words, and the awkwardness of referring forward or back.

At 276d Socrates says that the philosopher will take to writing only as an aid to memory or as *paidia* (from *pais*, a child) – play, pastime, or recreation,<sup>3</sup> and the question of the philosophical status which Plato assigned to his dialogues is bound up with his frequent use of this word, both in connexion with his own work and otherwise. We must, therefore, try to make up our minds what he meant by it. Often, of course, he employs it in the derogatory sense in which it is opposed to *spoudē*, seriousness or earnestness, and the corresponding verbs (*paizō*, *spoudazō*) to mean respectively joking or playing with someone and being in earnest. So earlier in this same dialogue, *Phaedrus* accuses Socrates of ironically mocking his praise

<sup>1</sup> See vol. III, 311f., and add Friedländer, *Pl.* I, 357 n. 6 for reff. to the literature on this controversy.

<sup>2</sup> The parallels are collected by Friedländer, *Pl.* I, 111f. I give just one example. At *Phaedrus* 276a *Phaedrus* describes the spoken word as ζῶντα καὶ ἐμψυχον, οὗ δὲ γεγραμμένος εἰδωλον ἂν τι λέγοιτο δικαίως. In Alcidas (28) ἐμψυχός ἐστι καὶ ζῆ, and written speeches are only εἰδωλα καὶ . . . μιμήματα λόγων. Alcidas's tract is believed to have been written before 380, which makes it likely that Plato had read it rather than vice versa. Many have written on παιδία in *P.* For readers of Dutch there is de Vries's *Spel bij P.* See also his commentary on *Phaedrus* 19–22 and reff. there, Gundert, *Zum Spiel bei P. in Beispiele* (1968), and Ooms, *παιδία bei Platon*, diss. Bonn 1956. Plass's 'Play and Philosophical Detachment in *P.*' (*TAPA* 1967) deals chiefly with erotic παιδία and G. Ardley's 'The Role of Play in the Philosophy of *P.*' (*Philosophy* 1967) is a somewhat personal and idiosyncratic work.

<sup>3</sup> For this last sense Cf. *Phil.* 30e ἀνάπαυλα γάρ, ὥ πρώταρχε, τῆς σπουδῆς ἐνίοτε γίνεται ἡ παιδία.

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of Lysias's speech, and Socrates replies, 'Do you really think I am joking and not in earnest?' And in the *Symposium* Agathon describes his flowery speech on love as combining *paidia* with a modicum of *spoudē*.<sup>1</sup> In the *Euthydemus* (278b) Socrates applies the word to the trick questions of the Sophists. Worth noting is the frequent connexion of *paidia* with imitation as opposed to the real thing, and with the mimetic arts. In the *Phaedrus* the written word was the copy or dream-image of the spoken, in the *Republic* (602b) painting and poetry, summed up as *mimesis*, are '*paidia* not *spoudē*', and in the *Sophist* (234b) all mimetic art is classified as a particularly skilful and pleasing kind of *paidia*.

In *Laws* 10 (889c-d) the atheist, who exalts mindless nature as the creator of the real world, dismisses the products of human intelligence as 'toys (*paidiai*) containing little reality, counterfeits like those of painting, music and the like'. To create anything *spoudaion*, men must cooperate with nature.

Not only does Plato make the general judgement that a wise man will write only as *paidia*; he often applies the term to his own work. In the *Phaedrus* itself, at the end of the discussion on written and spoken discourse, Socrates says (278b), 'Well, now I think we have sufficiently played out our game with *logoi*.' After inveighing, in the *Republic*, against unworthy students of philosophy who bring it into disrepute, Socrates pulls himself up with the words (536c): 'But I forgot that we are amusing ourselves (*paizomen*), and got too worked up... I lost my temper and spoke too seriously.' Parmenides, in the dialogue named after him, after being persuaded into giving a demonstration of the method of argument which he himself recommends, that is, drawing all the consequences from a hypothesis and then from its negation, says (137b), 'Well, since we've agreed to play this troublesome game...' <sup>2</sup> Along with the accusation of *eironeia* against Socrates went the complaint that he was always playing, never serious. Here we begin to see that Plato can use the word ironically,

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedrus* 234d, *Symp.* 197e. For some other examples see *Euthyphro* 3e, *Apol.* 20d and 27a, *Meno* 79a, *H. Maj.* 300d, *Gorg.* 500b, *Laws* 688b.

<sup>2</sup> The words form an oxymoron, and since Parmenides has referred to this kind of argument as mental gymnastics, there is probably a suggestion here of hard and exhausting physical games, which at the same time train and strengthen the body.

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not himself implying any criticism, since he certainly did not think of Socrates as a frivolous person. It is in an enthusiastic eulogy that Alcibiades speaks of him (*Symp.* 216e) as 'all his life shamming ignorance and playing with people'. But when he *is* serious, he goes on, as I once saw him, he brings forth divinely splendid and wonderful treasures. It is Alcibiades again who in the *Protagoras* (336d), when Socrates describes himself as forgetful, says he is just playing, or joking, as does Theaetetus (*Tht.* 168c) when Socrates depreciates his own apologia for Protagoras. Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.1.1), it may be noted, said that Socrates helped his companions in his play no less than in his seriousness.

Play for Plato had its place in the serious world. It was educationally valuable because children ought never to be forced to learn ('compulsory learning never sticks in the mind'), but their lessons should take the form of play.<sup>1</sup> This applies to 'arithmetic, geometry and all the studies preparatory to dialectic'. In the *Laws* (819b-c) he even gives examples of the kind of games by which children may be taught arithmetic. It is perhaps in the same spirit that in the *Politicus* he describes his own use of myth as 'introducing some play' into the discussion. 'Listen now to my story', continues the visitor from Elea, 'like children' (268d-e). As children may be educated by play, so we, Plato's readers, may be led to the truth not only by dialectic but also by a route which appeals at one level to our aesthetic appreciation of literary fiction and at another to our deep, perhaps unconscious involvement in the mythology of the race. He goes still further when he designates as *paidia* what are obviously serious discussions and applies to it epithets such as 'reasonable', 'sober', 'sensible', 'thoughtful'. The *Timaeus* is largely devoted to an account of the physical world and its contents, and because Plato likes to remind his readers that this whole field of change and becoming is secondary to the world of eternal and changeless reality, he calls all research into physical science no more than a 'likely story' which a man may pursue as a relief from discussions of eternal reality and a 'reasonable and sensible form of play' (59c-d). In the *Laws*, Plato's longest work, the whole discussion of law is described by the Athenian as 'playing

<sup>1</sup> *Rep.* 536e. See p. 526 below.

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a sober game suitable to old men' (685a), and again 'the rational *paidia* of old men' (769a, to which Clinias replies that it is rather the *spoudē* of men in their prime). In inventing laws for an imaginary city they are behaving like 'elderly children' (712b). Here too the use of *paidia* seems connected with the subject-matter, namely humanity and its affairs. Only God is worth serious devotion, and the best thing about man is that he was created to be the plaything of God.<sup>1</sup> So human affairs are not worth taking very seriously – 'but', he goes on immediately, 'unfortunately we are forced to take them seriously'. To Megillus's protest that he is slandering the human race, the Athenian replies that he was thinking of it in relation to the gods: 'if you like, let's say it is not contemptible, but worth a little *spoudē*'.<sup>2</sup> Now no one will believe that the author of the twelve books of the *Laws* and ten of the *Republic*, to say nothing of the *Statesman* and all the dialogues aimed at continuing the Socratic quest for virtue, thought of human conduct as scarcely worth serious attention. In his attribution of *paidia* and *spoudē* he himself can use a little playful irony to remind us that there is a divine realm above the human, there is a changeless reality above the turmoil of the physical world, and it is to these that our highest intellectual and spiritual powers should be devoted. As a description of Plato's attitude here, nothing could improve on the magnificent last sentence of the Sixth Letter, which asserts his twin principles that seriousness should never become tasteless and that seriousness and play are sisters.<sup>3</sup>

All this should help us to know Plato better and to put in their proper place the words of the *Phaedrus* which have so troubled readers who saw in them a dismissal of his own dialogues as mere *jeux d'esprit* which he never intended to be taken seriously. We can think differently of his remark (277e) that nothing ever written in verse or prose is worth taking very seriously when we know that he applied exactly the same phrase to the whole field of human action.

<sup>1</sup> Or the gods. Plato uses singular and plural indifferently. Cf. 644d.

<sup>2</sup> *Laws* 803b–804c. That human affairs are not worth taking very seriously has been said earlier, in the *Rep.* (604b). There however it receives a special appropriateness from its place in the context of an argument against giving way to immoderate grief at bereavement or other misfortune.

<sup>3</sup> If this letter was not by Plato, I wish we had more work by its unknown author. He was capable of writing like Plato at his best.

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We can see that when he described writing as the wise man's *paidia* he was not denying it serious value. At the very least it could be educative, and by making it a *mimesis* of dialectic, the 'common search' which was in his eyes the ideal method of philosophy, he has done his very best for those who 'follow the same trail' but have not had the good fortune to listen to Socrates or the discussions in the Academy. And after all, much of the dialogues *is* play. Who could deny it or would wish it otherwise? Friedländer described the *Cratylus* as 'much more like a series of merry pranks than a scientific treatise in linguistics'. In the *Sophist*, rightly hailed by the modern philosopher as one of the profoundly important late group of critical dialogues, Thompson noted 'vivacity in the conversations... pungency of satire, delicate persiflage, and idiomatic raciness of phrase'. The *Euthydemus* borders on the farcical, and the *Protagoras* has several comic passages, notably Socrates's parody of a Sophistic *epideixis* on the interpretation of a poem, and his straight-faced eulogy of Sparta as the most cultivated and philosophic of all Greek states. But one need not look for instances. All that Plato wrote is permeated with that seriousness which is no stranger to the Muses (*Ep.* 6, σπουδῇ μὴ ἀμούσῳ) and the play that is sister to it. As the *Epinomis* says (992b), the most truly wise man is playful and serious *at the same time*.

One more point remains. In the *Phaedrus*, besides what has been mentioned, Socrates says (278d-e) that a man who has nothing more valuable to offer than what he has put in literary form has no right to the name of philosopher. This has been taken as confirmation of their view by those who believe that Plato had an esoteric doctrine not revealed in the dialogues but only to his personal disciples in the intimate discussions of the Academy.<sup>1</sup> Whether he had such a doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Reff. to Kramer will be found in de Vries, *Phaedrus* 21. (Add his *Die grundsätzlichen Fragen... in Idee u. Zahl*.) De Vries disagrees. In his view Plato regards written work as inferior for two reasons: (1) the superiority of live philosophical conversation, (2) the artist's discontent even with his highest achievements; he has τιμιώτερα but even he cannot put them into words. (2) seems scarcely relevant to a comparison of written with spoken words. Vlastos, reviewing Kramer (*Gnomon* 1963, 641 ff.), said his theory would have the absurd consequence that in Plato's eyes justice, the soul, the gods, and other subjects treated in the dialogues were all inferior topics. But if K. is right, Plato need not have been thinking of different topics, but of different ways of treating them. Even the despised poets spoke of justice and the gods. One has only to think of the different versions of the doctrine of Forms in the dialogues and in



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or not, the words in question are most naturally taken as a brief reference back to the qualifications of a philosopher which have just been mentioned. A man, said Socrates, may produce written works and yet be a philosopher if (a) when he wrote he knew the truth, (b) he can take up a challenge and defend in argument what he has written, and (c) he himself is capable of demonstrating out of his own mouth the inferiority of the written word. These merits are indeed 'something more valuable than what he has written', and no one will be surprised if Plato, teacher and arguer as much as writer, claimed to possess them himself. This is not to prejudge the question whether Plato had more to teach than he could put into the written dialogues. That he did is plain from Aristotle and the Letters, and strongly hinted at in the dialogues themselves. One has only to think of *Republic* 6, where Socrates admits that knowledge of the Form of the Good is beyond them, and they must be content with analogies and similes. The problem must be left till later, but the opinion may be expressed here that whereas in the school Plato could go more deeply into the nature of being and goodness than was possible in his writings, what he taught was a continuation only, not a different doctrine. Aristotle quotes the dialogues freely, and always as a no less authentic source of Plato's teaching than what he imparted to his pupils but did not publish.

Much could be said in general about the nature of the dialogues, but most of it has been said before, and since the greater part of this volume will be devoted to a study of them individually, it is to be hoped that something of their qualities will emerge. I should simply like to end this section with two extracts from an assessment by Hermann Gundert which seem to me to make the essential points extremely well, and which therefore I have ventured to translate.<sup>1</sup>

(a) The Platonic dialogue is not a pleasing form of presentation in which to propound a doctrine or discuss a thesis which could also be

Aristotle's reports. Zeller (2.1.486) neatly, if perhaps superficially, anticipated the 'unwritten doctrine' school by claiming that by giving the written word the purpose of reminding us of the spoken, Plato expressly ascribed to it the same content!

<sup>1</sup> *Der plat. Dialog* pp. 16 and 19. The above was written before reading pp. 23 ff. of Ebert's *Meinung und Wissen*, 1974 (a book which contains more than its title suggests).

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developed in some other way. On the contrary it is the only legitimate form in which the philosophic logos may be crystallized. In the school, the continuous lecture may precede the talk; in the written work, which is delivered over to the public,<sup>1</sup> the freedom (*Offenheit*) of the dialogues offers the only means of drawing the reader into 'question and answer', the only way of preventing him from assuming a knowledge which he has not got; for as imaginative writing the dialogue is mimetic play, not to be taken seriously in comparison with real conversation, nor capable of expressing what is taken seriously there.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless it is the *mimesis* of the philosophical conversation, and its play is the seriousness of philosophy itself.

(b) [The author is here speaking of the *Meno*, and the error of separating artist from philosopher in it.] This 'form', the mimetic, belongs rather in essence to the philosophical 'content' of the dialogue. Where philosophy is embodied in conversation, every word, whether directed by opinion or by truth, is the logos of particular people in a particular world. Only here, where the subject in question declares itself throughout in the particular situation, gestures and turns of phrase of the speakers, can its generality be so expressed as to pave the way for a change in the soul.

Plato spoke the plain truth when he said that there was not, and would never be, any 'treatise' (σύγγραμμα or τέχνη) of his on the things that he took seriously. What he has left us is something much better, the *mimesis* of dialectical discussion itself.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE

I have said nothing of a passage in *Ep.* 2 which is partly identical with that quoted from *Ep.* 7. Its authenticity is much more doubtful. Many scholars who are ready to vouch for *Ep.* 7 as Plato's would not do the same for *Ep.* 2. Ross (*PTI* 158) considered it 'open to grave suspicion' and thought that the arguments for spuriousness put forward by Hackforth, Field and Pasquali 'would convince most readers'. If this is right, the passage would be an imitation of that in *Ep.* 7, and certainly the almost verbatim repetition of the denial that there was or ever would be a treatise by Plato looks very like it. The wider contexts are also very similar in phraseology. In *Ep.* 7 Plato is complaining to others about the conduct of

<sup>1</sup> Was Dr Gundert, I wonder, thinking of *Phaedrus* 275 d-e? (ὅταν δ' ἅπας γραφή, κυλινδείται μὲν πανταχοῦ πᾶς λόγος ὁμοίως παρὰ τοῖς ἐπαύουσι ὁμοίως δὲ παρ' οἷς οὐδὲν προσήκει.)

<sup>2</sup> In so far as this second phrase ('nor capable...') adds anything to the preceding one, it perhaps goes rather far.

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Dionysius in claiming to have mastered his doctrine and presuming to write on the subject; *Ep.* 2 purports to contain his admonitions about this to Dionysius himself. The passage runs as follows (314b-c): 'The greatest safeguard is not to write but to memorize, for inevitably what is written becomes public. For that reason I myself have never written anything about these things. There is not, nor will be, any treatise of Plato. The writings now called his belong to a Socrates made fair and new.' The last sentence is peculiar to this letter, and its last phrase admits of more than one interpretation. The adjective *neos* can mean either 'new' or, of a person, 'young'. So Grote translated (*Pl.* 1, 223) 'Socrates in the days of his youthful vigour and glory'; but the phrase could equally well mean 'a Socrates spruced up and brought up to date'. (See also Edelstein in *AJP* 1962.) This is more sensible, when one considers that the *Euthyphro* and *Crito* depict him at the time of his trial, when he was seventy, and the *Phaedo* in his last hours. Harward, who believed the letter genuine, explained the omission of the sentence from *Ep.* 7 chronologically (*Epp.* p. 174): *Ep.* 2 was written in 360, before the composition of the late dialogues in which Socrates retires into the background, but writing *Ep.* 7 in 353 Plato could no longer speak as if they did not exist.

If the words are Plato's,<sup>1</sup> what did he mean? Only, I should say, what one would conclude in any case from reading the dialogues, in which he never speaks in his own person and in most of them gives the leading part to Socrates. Socrates had been his inspiration and guiding star, and the teaching that he put into the master's mouth was intended, not indeed to reproduce unaltered what he had said, but to modify and develop it in ways which, as new philosophical questions arose, seemed to Plato to provide no more than an essential defence of the ideals for which Socrates had stood. (See further on this vol. III, 350-5.) It was 'Socrates made new' or brought up to date. Once again we must remember that, if genuine, the words occur in a letter, written to meet a particular situation and not as part of a carefully weighed and complete account for posterity of the Platonic writings. In the very next sentence (always assuming authenticity) Plato tells Dionysius to read the letter several times and then burn it—presumably, as Harward says, having kept his own draft.

Like the 7th, this letter also emphasizes the necessity for 'much conversation' and a lifetime of preparation. It says (314a-b) that the true doctrine sounds ridiculous to the uneducated, that it must be repeated and listened to over a long period, and that there have been gifted men who have only come to a full understanding of it after thirty years.

<sup>1</sup> The genuineness of the passage has again been defended by J. Stannard in *Phron.* 1960.

## IV

# EARLY SOCRATIC DIALOGUES

### INTRODUCTORY

Plato gives every dialogue separate treatment, adapting its subject to his choice of persons and occasion. In one way, therefore, each must be thought of as a separate unit, and there are some mavericks (the *Cratylus*, say, and the *Menexenus*) which it is particularly difficult to herd into a group. Others however are fairly amenable to such grouping, either on chronological grounds where these are convincing, or on grounds of subject-matter, or because they seem to represent much the same stage in Plato's philosophical pilgrimage. Such grouping has obvious conveniences, and it is possible to note similarities without being blind to the unique elements in each separate dialogue. An obvious case of a natural group is the late one of *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Politicus*. Another generally recognized group is the Socratic,<sup>1</sup> using that term not in the wide sense to denote all the dialogues in which Socrates takes the lead, but for the smaller, early group in which it may be claimed that Plato is imaginatively recalling, in form and substance, the conversations of his master without as yet adding to them any distinctive doctrines of his own. This was first distinguished as a separate group in 1839 by K. F. Hermann, who believed that in his first period Plato's Socrates has no other views or philosophical ideas than had the historic Socrates as we find him in Xenophon and other sources 'not open to suspicion'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bambrough summarizes Ryle's view of Plato's earlier progress thus: according to it 'the historical Socrates was interested in seeking definitions, but offered no metaphysical doctrine about the status of the objects or subjects of definition. Plato presents in the early aporetic dialogues a biographically faithful account of a Socrates engaged in informal conversation about moral concepts.' Later he developed his own theory of Forms. All this I accept wholeheartedly, and shall not here go into the more controversial historical parts of Ryle's 1966 book.

<sup>2</sup> For Hermann see Flashar, *Ion* 5. Flashar accepts his view as a 'zu communis opinio gewordene These', though he himself doubts its validity. See especially p. 104, and also Witte, *Wiss. v. G. u. B.* 45 for the view that P.'s literary activity did not begin until he founded the Academy at the age of 40. W. accepts as a consequence that this excludes any close connexion with Socrates, and all the dialogues must be considered as expressions of P.'s own independent philosophy.

## *Early Socratic dialogues*

This view found favour with a large number of scholars, but was not without its attackers. Notable among these was Karl Joël in 1921, who after two pages of discussion declared flatly that 'the whole of the supposed "Socratic period" of Plato is an arbitrary fabrication, unsupported by any ancient evidence' (*Gesch.* 1, 737). So also Emma Edelstein in 1935: 'It is impossible to separate off a definite group of Socratic dialogues' (*X. u. P. Bild* 21); and Friedländer (*Pl.* 1, 135): 'From the beginning there are no "Socratic dialogues" that might be distinguished from the "purely Platonic" dialogues of a later period.' Yet Friedländer goes on: 'Still, the Platonic Socrates grows out of the historic Socrates.' That being so, the question is obviously one of degree only, and there can be no 'purely Platonic' dialogues of any period if 'purely Platonic' means written by a Plato finally purged of the influence of Socrates, for that he never became. Nor at the other extreme can there be 'purely Socratic' dialogues untouched by Plato, for the reason given by Field (*P. and Contemps.* 52): 'However faithfully a man of ability tries to reproduce the point of view of someone else, he generally puts something of his own into it. . . . No disciple can ever really literally reproduce his master's teaching in its entirety, even if he believes that he has done so.' The question where Socrates ended and Plato began is one which he could not have fully answered himself. The Socratic philosophy shades into Platonism. Yet Field thought that in his first writings Plato believed himself to be faithful to Socrates and using simply the sort of arguments that Socrates himself used. His aim was to give the world something of the Socratic spirit and to defend his memory. Since it is obvious that later in life Plato was trying to do much more, this similarity of aim should be enough to give these early dialogues a character of their own.

Cornford had another reason for regarding certain of the early dialogues as a compact group. Setting aside the *Apology* and *Crito*, which aim more at a direct defence of Socrates than at inculcating any philosophical lesson, he saw in the *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Euthyphro* and *Lysis* evidence of a single plan. This is visible in both structure, or method, and subject. The chief similarities are these:

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(i) The question to be discussed arises out of scenes of ordinary life described at some length, in contrast to the plunge *in medias res* of *Gorgias*, *Meno* or *Cratylus*.

(ii) The objective of all of them is the definition of an important moral or religious conception: courage in the *Laches*, temperance in the *Charmides*, piety in the *Euthyphro*, friendship (in a very wide sense) in the *Lysis*, to which one may add justice, in a dialogue which may have been planned at the same time and developed later into the first book of the *Republic*.<sup>1</sup> These, with the exception of friendship, form four of the five 'cardinal virtues' recognized in Greece. The fifth, wisdom or knowledge (σοφία), is what, in Socrates's view, they all may be reduced to.

(iii) The method of procedure, governing the structure of the dialogues, is this. A series of definitions is elicited from the respondents, each a modification of the last necessitated by Socrates's objections, until they arrive at a clear formula. This is then criticized in turn and finally rejected. No definition is finally adopted, and the apparent end is deadlock and bafflement; and the argument has been so conducted that the reader is left in doubt what conclusion he is meant to draw.

It is these similarities, both of aim and of structure, that justify the belief that these four dialogues at least were designed to form a single group.<sup>2</sup> One may add that in all of them Plato still seems to be trying to portray for posterity, as well as he can, Socrates himself and his method of handling a discussion, and that this applies to a few others as well.

For our present purposes I shall choose nine dialogues as deserving to be called Socratic by the criteria here explained, and take them in the following order. First the *Apology* and *Crito* as a defence of Socrates's whole life and a memorial to his conduct at and after his trial. In its historical content, describing his last hours and death, the *Phaedo* belongs here too, but the philosophical subject-matter and

<sup>1</sup> Many scholars believe that *Rep.* I was composed much earlier than the other books, and originally formed a separate dialogue which they call *Thrasymachus*. But see p. 437 below.

<sup>2</sup> Cornford amplified in lectures what he writes in *CAH* VI, 312. He was, as he acknowledged, following up a suggestion of von Arnim, *Jugendd.* 88.

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its treatment are so different that it is best taken with a later group, to which the date of its composition doubtless corresponds. Next comes the *Euthyphro*, a bridge between the 'trial' group and the 'definition' group, for its setting refers to the coming trial, and the choice of a definiendum, namely piety, is linked explicitly (at 5 a-d) with the charge of impiety levelled against Socrates. There follow the other dialogues of definition, *Laches*, *Charmides*, *Lysis* and *Hippias Major*, of which the last-named, which seems to aim at holding up Hippias to ridicule quite as much as finding the definition ostensibly being sought, forms another bridge to the last two. These, the *Hippias Minor* and *Ion*, while pursuing Socratic themes, seem chiefly designed to show how Socrates carried out his 'mission' (vol. III, 408f.) by tackling inflated professionals – a Sophist and a rhapsode – who need to be shown that, like him, they know nothing. Of course Socrates crosses swords with Sophists in other dialogues, but in scale and seriousness they are in a different class from these short, amusing pieces.

The order adopted here is one of convenience, and makes no assumptions about dates of composition. These will be dealt with for each dialogue separately, so far as necessary and possible. The *Apology* and *Crito* may not be Plato's earliest writings, and the *Laches* may have preceded the *Euthyphro*; but whereas one may with some confidence call this collectively the earliest group, it is scarcely possible to determine an order within it.<sup>1</sup>

### (1) THE APOLOGY

The *Apology* is one of the most important sources for the life, character and views of Socrates himself, and has been extensively used as such in the last volume.<sup>2</sup> Here it must be looked at as a whole, with any

<sup>1</sup> Of the 'definition dialogues' Gauss (*Handkomm.* 1.2.9) says it is perfectly possible that Plato worked on them together and treated them from the start as substantially a single whole. This accords well with von Arnim's and Cornford's opinions.

<sup>2</sup> The following are the chief points referred to: opinion on historicity, 478 n. 1; accusers and charges, 382; Aristophanes and the question of Socrates's scientific period, 374f., 423; the Oracle (Socrates wisest because he knows nothing), 339 n., 405–8; mission to convince others of ignorance, 408f.; self-chosen poverty, 379; folly of fearing death, 478f.; religious views, 473 ff.; divine sign, 402–4; exhortation to 'care for the soul', 467; just man must avoid politics,

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particular problems to which it gives rise, and from our present point of view as students of Plato.

*Date.* The stylometrists offer no help beyond saying that it belongs to a large 'early group', within which it could be either Plato's first work or alternatively written after the *Protagoras* or even later. (See Leisegang, *RE* 2394f.) This leaves plenty of scope for argument. It is best to leave aside purely subjective impressions like Croiset's (Budé ed. 132) that it could not have been written just after Socrates's execution because its tone does not correspond to the feelings which must have been agitating Plato at that time. Since it purports to reproduce the speeches made by Socrates at his trial, at which Plato says he was present, it would be natural to suppose that he would write it as soon as possible, while the words were fresh in his memory. So thought Zeller (2.1.529 n. 2) and Adam (ed. xxxi). Friedländer (who denies it, *Pl.* II, 330 n. 4) called this 'the customary view'. Most of those who have held it believe also that the *Apology* was Plato's first work, none having been written before the death of Socrates. Besides the names in Friedländer's note, one may mention H. Raeder (*P.'s Ph. Ent.* 92), who added the argument that the *Apology* foreshadows the other Socratic dialogues, in which Plato worked out more fully, but with certain variations, examples of Socrates's cross-examination of statesmen, poets and others which are briefly mentioned in the earlier work. A more recent instance is H. Gauss (*Handkomm.* 1.2.10), who kept to what in 1953 he felt bound to call the 'old-fashioned' view, and suggests that Plato wrote the *Apology* in Megara.

On the other hand von Arnim, and Hackforth elaborating and criticizing his arguments, put it later, mainly on the ground that Xenophon's *Apology* precedes Plato's but cannot itself have been written before 394 when Xenophon returned to Greece from Asia. Others have followed them, yet not everyone believes that Xenophon's

413; his defiance of the democracy and of the Thirty, 379f.; claim to have no private pupils, 373; Plato's presence in court, 349 n. 1, 478 n.; Socrates different from other men, 414; counter-penalty proposed by S., 384; 'the unexamined life', 466; S.'s age, 339; his prophecy, 331.



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is the earlier.<sup>1</sup> Others again have tried to get nearer to the date of Plato's work by establishing its relation to the *Accusation of Socrates* by Polycrates, which is generally agreed to have been written between 394 and 390.<sup>2</sup> The periphrastic language of J. A. Coulter (*Apol. and Palamedes* 303 n. 35: 'It seems most reasonable to view the *Apology* in the context of the renewed debate on the influence of Socrates which scholars have connected with Polycrates' *Kategoria*') presumably means that he regarded the *Apology* as later, whereas Hackforth (*CPA* 44), though putting it after 394, thought it probably earlier.

If the external evidence were compelling, one would not wish to set against it conclusions drawn from one's impressions of the work itself; but it is not, and I am inclined, under their influence, to agree that it was Plato's first work, written not long after the event. But certainty is impossible.

*Historicity.* The *Apology* purports to be the actual speech made by Socrates at his trial in 399, and Plato twice mentions that he was present himself (34a, 38b). This may seem sufficient to justify a statement like Grote's that the *Apology* 'is a report, more or less exact, of the real defence of Socrates'.<sup>3</sup> Burnet added (in his ed., 63 f.) that 'as most of those present must have been still living when the *Apology* was published, he would have defeated his own end if he had given a fictitious account of the attitude of Socrates and of the main lines of his defence'. There are however difficulties, and to Burnet's point one can reply that it depends what the conventions of the time would lead his readers to expect.

In favour of the idea that Plato's *Apology* would be accepted as an imaginative work rather than an attempt at a true record, a number of considerations have been put forward. It is said that it was only

<sup>1</sup> Arnim, *X.'s Mem. u. d. 'Apol.' des S.*; Hackforth, *Comp. of P.'s Apol.* ch. 2. For other opinions see vol. III, 340 n.

<sup>2</sup> It mentioned the rebuilding of the Long Walls in 394. See Favorinus *ap.* D.L. 2.39 and P. Treves in *RE*, XLII. Halbb. 1740. Treves dates it 'mit Sicherheit' to 393-2. On Polycrates see his article or the *reft.* in vol. III, 331 n. 1. (Bluck in his *Meno*, p. 118, argued for a later date.)

<sup>3</sup> Grote, *Pl.* I, 158 n. u., and on p. 281: 'this is in substance the real defence pronounced by Sokrates; reported, and of course dressed up, yet not intentionally transformed, by Plato'. In Zeller's time this was 'the prevailing view' (Zeller 2.1.195 n. 1).

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one of a whole literature of Socratic apologies, by Xenophon, Lysias, Theodectes of Phaselis (a pupil of Isocrates), Demetrius of Phalerum, Theon of Antioch, Plutarch and Libanius. This list is given for instance by Lesky (*HGL* 499) as itself a reason for not accepting Plato as a reliable witness. However, it could do with a little analysis. Theon of Antioch is mentioned in the *Suda* as a Stoic who wrote an *Apology* of Socrates. He is otherwise completely unknown, but since he was a Stoic he must have lived a considerable time later than Socrates or Plato. Plutarch belongs to the first and second centuries A.D. and Libanius to the fourth. That imaginative *Apologies* were written in Hellenistic and Roman times is hardly relevant to our judgement of Plato's. Nor would one expect a record of Socrates's own defence from Demetrius of Phaleron, who was not born until at least forty years after his execution, and so was in all probability writing some seventy years after the publication of Plato's *Apology*. Theodectes, a native of Phaselis on the coast of Lycia, is described by the *Suda* as a pupil of Plato, Isocrates and Aristotle. As to this one can only agree with Diehl (*RE* 2. Reihe, x. Halbb., 1722) that his relations with these three masters, whose years of birth are separated by more than a generation, must have differed considerably. He was also known as a familiar friend of Alexander the Great. More important is the fact that, as we know from a quotation in Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1399a7), his defence of Socrates was written in his own name and not as the speech of Socrates himself. This is also true of a large part of the *Apology* of Xenophon, and what is put into Socrates's mouth is given as second-hand: 'Hermogenes told me he said...' Besides Xenophon, the only contemporary in the list is Lysias (c. 459-380). We know nothing of the form which his *Apology* took, but he cannot, any more than Xenophon, compete with Plato as a first-hand authority.

We need not waste time over the argument that because the dialogues of Plato are avowedly fictitious, or at least imaginative, the *Apology* must be also. Many of the dialogues are represented as taking place when Plato was unborn or a child, and the *Apology* is in an entirely different category. Even less substantial is the argument put forward by Schanz (see Burnet, ed. p. 64) that since the aim of every defence is to secure acquittal and from this point of view the *Apology*

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is ineffective, therefore it cannot be the defence which Socrates actually made. It is in fact more a defiance than a defence, and so of a kind which none but Socrates could have delivered on such an occasion and which, moreover, he is known to have delivered. At the beginning of his own *Apology* Xenophon writes: 'Others too have written on the subject of Socrates's defence and death, and all succeed in conveying his lofty tone; from which it is clear that this is how Socrates really spoke.' This arrogance, he goes on, seemed foolish, but in fact he actually chose to die rather than live. When therefore he says in Plato's version (29c-d) that even if the dicasts were willing to spare him on condition that he gave up pestering respectable citizens in what he called his philosophic quest, he would not do so; and when, after the death-sentence has been passed, he adds (38d-e):

Perhaps you think my plight is due to lack of arguments which would have persuaded you, had I thought it right to go to any lengths to avoid conviction. It was not arguments I lacked, but impudence and shamelessness and the will to tell you the sort of things you best like to hear... things unworthy of me, as I claim, but such as you are used to hearing from others

we may be sure that this is the authentic voice of Socrates.

More serious is the point that Plato's version reads like a finished artistic composition, and employs some of the rhetorical devices repeatedly used by the orators and originating in the current hand-books. When Socrates begins by disclaiming any skill in oratory, and tells the court to expect nothing but the unadorned truth, because he is entirely unfamiliar with the ways of law-courts and can only speak in his accustomed homely manner, we might think that this is the genuine Socratic irony and not the way anyone else would talk – until we learn that to conciliate the dicasts by pleading inexperience and deprecating the deceptive fluency of the other side was simply to follow the accepted rules. Even the proud refusal to stoop, as others do, to pleading for his life with appeals to pity finds parallels in other forensic speeches, including that textbook exercise of rhetorical and sophistical argument, the *Palamedes* of Gorgias (§33).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For these and other examples of rhetorical features see Diès, *Autour de P.* 409–11, and Burnet, ed. pp. 66f. On the relation of the *Palamedes* to Plato's *Apology* see further pp. 76f. below.

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Now we have contemporary evidence (Xen. *Apol.* 2-5) that in spite of the remonstrances of friends, Socrates refused to prepare a defence in advance, claiming that his divine sign had forbidden it; and according to later tradition he refused to use a speech which the orator Lysias had written for him.<sup>1</sup> If this makes it unlikely that he would have delivered anything as finished as the *Apology*, it also shows that even though protestations of oratorical inadequacy were common form, when Socrates tells the court (17c) that he will be speaking at random and using whatever words come into his head, it was in his case true.

Do these forensic ploys mean that Plato was doing *post eventum* what Lysias did before, writing the speech that Socrates ought to have delivered, instead of the one he did? Not necessarily. What need had a Socrates of previous study? Never was he at a loss for words or well-ordered arguments, as many Athenians knew to their cost. He might never have spoken in court before, but he knew all about the technique of oratory from arguments with Gorgias, Protagoras and other experts, and was capable of challenging Gorgias on his own ground. There is no improbability in supposing him to have been as familiar with the details of contemporary rhetorical theory and practice as Plato pictures him in the *Phaedrus*, where he extemporizes a speech in rivalry with one by Lysias that has been read to him. Xenophon says that when Critias drafted a law against teaching 'the art of *logoi*' it was aimed especially at Socrates; and though Xenophon connects it with his conversations with the young, the phrase referred primarily to rhetoric. (See vol. III, 44 with notes, 177f.) When he found himself for the first time, at the age of seventy, facing a court, these devices of the speech-writers would naturally come into his mind, and whether or not we agree with Burnet (ed. p. 67) that his exordium was deliberate parody, he would enjoy the contrast which they afforded to the actual content of his message. Nothing could be further from current defensive rhetoric than the main burden of the speech, as even a summary will make plain. Nor

<sup>1</sup> Cic. *De or.* 1.54.231, D.L. 2.40, etc. (Other reff. in Stock's ed., 26 n. 2.) In Athens the defendant spoke in his own person, but it was customary to employ a professional speech-writer (λογογράφος) to compose the speech. (Phillipson, *Trial* 253.)

does he employ that central, indispensable instrument of the rhetorician's art, the argument from probability, familiar with it though he was (*Phdr.* 272d–273a).<sup>1</sup>

More remarkable than these general points are the specific similarities of phrase which have been noticed between the *Apology* and the *Palamedes* of Gorgias,<sup>2</sup> a rhetorical exercise which takes the form of a defence of the mythical culture-hero Palamedes when falsely accused by Odysseus of betraying the Greeks in the Trojan War. J. A. Coulter says rightly (p. 271) that not all the examples cited by scholars are convincing, but that the remainder make the hypothesis of undesigned coincidence unlikely. Moreover he extends the similarities from verbal parallels to resemblances of structure and arrangement in which both depart somewhat from the conventional form of courtroom oratory. It is curious also that in both Plato and Xenophon Socrates mentions Palamedes with sympathy as one who, like himself, suffered from an unjust verdict.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of verbal and formal coincidences, I would not wholly follow Coulter in calling Socrates's *Apology* an 'adaptation' of Palamedes's (p. 270), nor speak of Plato as 'modelling' the *Apology* on Gorgias's work. In content and spirit the two are poles apart. In brief, the one is Sophistic, the other Socratic. Throughout Gorgias's speech, Palamedes is playing the probability argument for all it is worth.<sup>4</sup> Most of his arguments

<sup>1</sup> See vol. III, 178–80. The only example I notice is the argument of 25c–e: 'If I make people worse, I risk coming to harm at their hands. Is it likely that I should willingly do anything so foolish?' Yet here the rhetorical form expresses a sentiment entirely Socratic-Platonic. Some (e.g. Jowett, I, 337, and Taylor, *PMW* 163) see in it the full force of the paradox that no one does wrong willingly (vol. III, 459f.), and at least it is close to *Rep.* 335b–d.

<sup>2</sup> For bibliography see J. A. Coulter, *HSCP* 1964, 299 n. 1. References in the text are to this article. On pp. 272f. he reproduces the verbal parallels.

<sup>3</sup> Xen. *Apol.* 26, Plato *Apol.* 41b. Although I agree with Coulter's general thesis that if the echoes of Gorgias's *Pal.* are conscious they must be hostile rather than complimentary, I cannot accept his argument (pp. 296f.) that Socrates's reason for wishing to meet Palamedes in Hades is that he may refute him as a pretender to wisdom. The points that he adduces are outweighed by (a) the coupling of Palamedes with Ajax son of Telamon 'and any other of the ancients who has died by an unjust judgement': it is *their* (ἐκεῖνων) fate which Socrates wishes to compare with his own, not Palamedes's only, so that ἀντιπαράβαλλον cannot have the sense which Coulter gives it; (b) the fact that it is only in the next sentence, as a new point (καὶ δὴ τὸ μέγιστον . . .), that Socrates introduces the idea of subjecting τοὺς ἐκεῖ to cross-examination and instances possible victims; (c) the parallel passage in Xenophon, which says simply: 'Palamedes comforts me also, who died in the same way that I do.'

<sup>4</sup> Pace Bux and Calogero; see the latter in *JHS* 1957, I, p. 16.

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to prove that he is not a traitor (e.g. 'Would I do it for glory? But a traitor wins only disgrace; or for safety? But a traitor has every man's hand against him, not to mention the gods') reduce themselves to absurdity by proving, if anything, that no man is or ever has been a traitor.

When Socrates speaks of Gorgias along with the other Sophists Prodicus, Hippias and Euenus, it is obvious from the whole paragraph (19e–20c) that he is being heavily ironical. Nor is it credible that Plato would have put into his mouth the criticism of rhetoric which he directs against Gorgias in the *Gorgias* if Socrates had in fact been in sympathy with him. (Cf. also vol. III, 271–3.) We may therefore safely reject, with Coulter (p. 271), the thesis of some scholars that the reminiscences of the *Palamedes* imply approval of it. It may be that, just as he enjoyed pulling the Sophists' legs by ironic expressions of admiration and envy of their skill, so it amused him, when he found himself for the first and last time in the position of a pleader, to recall – in a speech whose tone and content were utterly different – some touches of a well known specimen of their art. At any rate their presence does not demonstrate that they, and the actual mention of Palamedes, were added by Plato and not in the speech of Socrates at all.<sup>1</sup>

Some have thought certain episodes in the *Apology* imaginary, while admitting the substantial historicity of the rest. One is the interrogation of Meletus (24c–28a), in which Socrates certainly carries out his promise (17c) to speak as he was used to speak in the marketplace. Doubters have to admit, however, that this interrogation of his accuser in the middle of his defence was a legally recognized

<sup>1</sup> Calogero says reasonably (*JHS* 1957, 1, 15): 'He [Socrates] must also have remembered Gorgias' *Apology of Palamedes* when he pronounced before his judges his own apology, of which we certainly have the best document in Plato's work.' When Coulter says (p. 295): 'By now the implication will have become clear that the *Apology* in an entire stratum of meaning has little or no relation to an actual courtroom speech delivered by Socrates', it is not easy to know what sense to attach to the words I have italicized. Calogero cites the mention of Palamedes in Xenophon, against which it is not conclusive to say (Coulter 302) that this might only mean that Xenophon had read Plato's *Apology*. Equally he might not, and those who believe, with von Arnim and Hackforth, that Xenophon's *Apology* was written first, have some reason on their side. See Hackforth, *CPA* ch. 2. The main thesis of Calogero, that Gorgias himself taught the Socratic principle that no one does wrong willingly, is certainly incredible, and has been adequately dealt with by Coulter on pp. 300–2.

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practice,<sup>1</sup> and are forced back on to subjective judgements: the eristic tone of the questions is unworthy of Socrates.<sup>2</sup> (Have the objectors ever read the *Hippias Minor*, in which Socrates is *not* on trial for his life?) Another section which some have declared impossible is the final speech which Socrates made after he had been both convicted and sentenced. This, said Wilamowitz (*Pl.* I, 165, following Schanz), would never have been allowed, and if it had, none of the dicasts would have waited to listen. There is no evidence whether such a concession was allowed or not, though no one else is known to have availed himself of it. If it were, a good many would stay out of curiosity; it was their last chance to hear this quite unusual master of the art of *logoi*. Since Wilamowitz a number of critics have argued against him that such a speech did take place, and that even if the content is largely Plato's, he could not have inserted it if it had been a legal impossibility.<sup>3</sup> Nor could Xenophon, in whom also a speech after sentence occurs, as does an exchange with Meletus.<sup>4</sup>

No conclusion can be new on this much discussed subject, and none can be certain; but it is permissible to side with those who think that Plato has done his best to recall and set down what he remembered hearing Socrates say, while giving it the amount of shaping and revision which everyone would expect. Taylor (*PMW* 156) reminded

<sup>1</sup> For evidence see Phillipson, *Trial* 255; Coulter, *HSCP* 1964, 276 and n. 23. Coulter quotes Gorg. *Pal.* 22–6 as providing yet another coincidence between the two works, but Palamedes's is an interrogation in name only: he supplies the answers himself. I quote one example of the legal justification. At 25d Socrates bids Meletus answer, 'for the law orders you to answer', and in Demosthenes *C. Steph.* 2.10, p. 1131, a law is quoted thus: 'It is compulsory for the opponents (ἀντιδίκαιοι) to answer each other's questions.'

<sup>2</sup> For Wilamowitz, on the other hand (*Pl.* II, 51), this was the *real*, human Socrates, whom Plato later turned into a model of virtue!

<sup>3</sup> See Burnet, ed. 161f.; Phillipson, *Trial* 381f.; Hackforth, *CPA* 138f.; Friedlander, *Pl.* II, 170. It is, I think, unlikely that Plato would have put in the words ἐν ᾧ οἱ ἀρχόντες ἀσχολίαν ἔχουσι καὶ οὕτω ἔρχομαι κτλ. and ἕως ἔξεστιν, if they were contrary to fact.

<sup>4</sup> These coincidences with Xenophon, like the mention of Palamedes, can be put down airily to copying on Xenophon's part, but (apart from the uncertainty of dates) this is extremely unlikely when one considers the similarity of formal structure in the two *Apologies* coupled with the vast gulf that separates them in detail. (The structural similarities are best brought out in Stock's ed., 24f.) The obvious inference is that the form of the defence was laid down for both writers because it was that employed by Socrates himself, whereas in filling in this framework Plato had the double advantage of his presence in court and his fuller understanding of Socrates, while Xenophon was hampered by his reliance on others and his own inability to rise to Socratic heights. (See vol. III, 338–40.)

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us that Demosthenes and other orators revised their own speeches before publication, and in editing the words of another, and that his own martyred master, Plato probably went a little further towards the method of Thucydides (this obvious comparison has often been made), who stated that, while keeping as closely as he could to the general sense of what was actually said, he supplemented memory or the reports of others by his own view of what a speaker would think it necessary to say in the given situation (Thuc. 1.22.1). This would be all the easier as there was no written text of Socrates's defence, though its absence does not mean that Plato could not remember most of what he said. Writing, as he says himself (*Phaedrus* 275 a), does not strengthen the memory but saps it, and when so much more was done by the spoken word, memories were stronger. Besides, whatever the actual date of the *Apology* as finally given to the world, it was a habit with Socrates's pupils to make full notes of what he said (vol. III, 343 f.), and on this of all occasions Plato would not fail to do so.

If this is too much for some sceptics, there is the other widely held view that Plato's aim was not to reproduce the defence made by Socrates at his trial, but to cast in that form his own defence of the philosopher's whole life, to tell us of his mission and to describe in a living portrait the whole greatness, the unique personality of the 'best, wisest and most just' of all men known to him. After all, it is said, the *Apology* is in fact a defence of his life and teaching, and treats the actual charges only briefly and with some contempt. But at the very beginning Socrates offers adequate and convincing reasons for this. His danger did not come primarily from the indictment of Meletus, but from the 'anonymous accusers' who over many years had encouraged a prejudice against him in the minds of the Athenian establishment. This explanation is seriously meant, and fully accounts for the course taken by the defence. The actual charges were two only; disbelief in the city's gods and corrupting the young. The prosecutors must have known that, even apart from the amnesty (vol. III, 381 f.), it would not be easy on either of these counts to produce the kind of positive evidence necessary to satisfy a court; but they relied on (19b1, ἢ δὴ καὶ πιστεύων) the dislike and suspicion he had aroused



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to create an atmosphere favourable to their case. To dissipate this atmosphere was therefore the prime necessity, as he repeats several times, and all that he said to that end was strictly relevant to his defence.

In any case what matters is that it is Socrates that Plato is giving us – what he saw in Socrates, naturally, and doubtless (as some of the critics have liked to put it) an artist's portrait rather than a photograph, but all the truer to character for that. So much at least everyone would admit today, and it is as such that the *Apology* has been used in building up our own portrait of Socrates in the last volume.

### *Summary*

#### *(i) Main Speech (17a–35d)*

*Exordium.* My accusers were most persuasive but not truthful, especially when they warned you against me as a dangerously clever speaker. What I say will be random and unpolished – but true. Having no experience of law-courts, I must beg your patience if you hear me speaking in the way I am accustomed to use in the market-place.<sup>1</sup>

*Reply to the 'old accusers' (18a–24b).* I do not fear my present prosecutors so much as those who for many years have carried on a campaign of lies about me, calling me a 'wise man' who investigates the secrets of nature and makes the weaker argument the stronger, practices popularly connected with atheism. These slanderers are many, and have got at you from your childhood, and I am helpless against them because, except for the comic poets, they are anonymous. These are my real accusers, and against them I must first make my defence.

I have no wish to disparage natural science, but in fact I know nothing about it. I challenge you – ask each other, you who have heard me talk – have you ever heard me utter a word on such subjects? Nor am I a professional teacher like the Sophists, though I should be proud to have their skill.

<sup>1</sup> 17c ἐν ἀγορᾷ ἐπὶ τῶν τραπεζῶν. We are apt to think of talking 'in the agora by the money-changers' tables' as a particular habit of Socrates, but it may have been one of the things that contributed to his being thought a Sophist. In the *H. Min.* (368b) he says he has heard Hippias διεξιόντος ἐν ἀγορᾷ ἐπὶ ταῖς τραπεzaῖς.

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Then what is the explanation of these reports? I will tell you if you will listen quietly, though it may seem like boasting. Chaerephon asked the Delphic Oracle if anyone was wiser than I, and the Oracle said no. (Chaerephon is dead, but his brother will witness to it.) Now please be quiet: this really is relevant. Knowing my ignorance, I wondered what the god could mean, and thought of a plan to test his reply. I went to a man with a reputation for wisdom – a statesman – hoping to be able to say ‘You said I was wisest, but he is wiser’; but I found that in fact he was not wise, and I was just that little bit wiser than at least I knew my ignorance. I tried others with the same result. It angered them, which made me sorry and afraid, but I had to take the god seriously, and I discovered that the people with the biggest reputations were the worst. Poets were so far from being able to explain their own poems that I could only conclude that they did not write from knowledge but in a divine trance, like prophets. Yet because of their poetry they thought themselves wise in other matters too. So I decided that I had the same advantage over them as over the politicians.

Lastly I went to the craftsmen. They certainly had valuable knowledge which I lacked, and in this respect were wiser.<sup>1</sup> But they made the same mistake as the poets: because they were good at their craft, they thought they understood the highest matters too. So I decided that I was better off as I was, without their knowledge but also without their kind of ignorance. The Oracle was right.

This cross-examining is what has brought enmity and slander on me, and the name of ‘wise’. It is the god who is wise, and he only took me as an example, his message being: ‘He is wisest of you who, like Socrates, realizes that he has no wisdom worth the name.’ So I still go around examining anyone whom I think wise, and if he proves not to be, I help the god by demonstrating it. This business has left me no leisure for the state’s affairs or my own, and brought me into poverty.

I must admit, too, that the young men of leisure who follow me enjoy the process and copy it, and their victims blame me – not

<sup>1</sup> I translate *sophos* as wise, but its application to the craftsman in respect of his skill shows what a clumsy fit the English word is. For *sophos* see vol. III, 27.

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themselves – and say I corrupt the youth; but when they are asked how, and by what teaching, they don't know, and trot out the stock charges levelled at all philosophers: 'probing into nature', 'atheism', 'making the weaker case the stronger' – anything rather than the truth, that they have been caught pretending to a wisdom they don't possess. These are influential and persuasive people, and so the tales are spread, and now Meletus attacks me on behalf of the poets, Anytus for the craftsmen and politicians, and Lycon for the orators.

*Reply to the present charges (24b–28a).* Now for the good patriot Meletus and his fellow-prosecutors. Their charge runs something like this: Socrates is guilty of corrupting the young and of not believing in the city's gods but in novel supernatural phenomena.<sup>1</sup> In return I charge Meletus with bringing a frivolous accusation and feigning concern about matters to which he has never given a thought.

Come now Meletus, you say I corrupt the young. Who then educates and improves them?

M. The laws.

I said *who*, not *what*. Who then? The dicasts? The audience? The Councillors? The Assembly?

M. Yes, all of them.<sup>2</sup>

Truly the young are lucky if in all Athens only one man corrupts and all the rest improve them. But I don't believe it is so, any more than with horses or other animals. It is the very few skilled vets or breeders who improve them, and the vast majority spoil them. You evidently haven't given any thought to the matter.

Besides, who would want to live among bad citizens rather than good? I should only be risking harm to myself, and am not such a fool as to do that voluntarily. But if I can't help it, that is not a crime.

Anyway, how do I corrupt the youth? Is it by teaching the irreligion that you ascribe to me in your indictment?

<sup>1</sup> For the official version of the charge see vol. III, 382. The neuter δαιμόνια, there (and most commonly) translated 'divinities', covers a wide range which cannot be reproduced in English; but the accusers had especially in mind his 'daemonic sign'. He says so himself (31d), and cf. *Euthyphro* 3b, *Xen. Mem.* 1.1.2.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. what Anytus (another of Socrates's accusers) says in the *Meno* (92e), that a young man needs no instruction from Sophists, because 'any Athenian gentleman whom he happens to meet, if he will follow his advice, will make him better than the Sophists would'.

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M. Most certainly it is.

Well, I don't understand the charge. Do you mean I believe in *some* gods, but not the City's, or in no gods at all, as an out-and-out atheist?

M. The latter, I say. You don't believe in any gods at all.

Not even sun and moon?

M. No indeed, gentlemen. He says the sun is a stone and the moon earth.

So you can't even tell me apart from Anaxagoras! The court is not so ignorant. Anyhow your charges are inconsistent: I believe in no gods and I believe in new gods – for I can't believe in 'supernatural phenomena' without believing in supernatural beings, spirits or gods.<sup>1</sup>

*Return to the general prejudice: value of Socrates's mission (28a–34b).*

That will do for Meletus. It does not need much argument to show I am innocent of his charges. If I am convicted, it will be due not to him and Anytus but to the popular slander and ill-will which I have mentioned. If you think I should be ashamed at behaving in a way that endangers my life, I reply that any man worth his salt considers only whether what he is doing is right or wrong, not what its effect will be on himself. Otherwise the heroes at Troy – and above all Achilles – would be blameworthy. I obeyed orders and stood my ground in the army, and still more must I obey the gods' orders to philosophize and examine myself and others. Fearing death is itself that worst sort of ignorance, thinking we know what we do not: it may be a great boon. So even if you were willing to acquit me on condition that I gave up my philosophic quest, I should say that, with all respect, I shall obey the god rather than you. I must go on telling you to care about improving your soul rather than about money and honour; and if anyone says he does, I must question and examine him, and reprove him if it prove to be untrue. You may acquit me or not, but I could not do otherwise if I had to die many times over.

<sup>1</sup> The argument that one cannot believe in things *daimonia* without believing in *daimones*, and that *daimones* are the children of gods, is so wholly Greek as to be scarcely reproducible in English.

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If you kill me, you will only hurt yourselves. Meletus and Anytus cannot hurt me, for a good man cannot be harmed by a worse. Death, exile or disfranchisement they may impose – all evils in their view, but not in comparison with the evil of being the one to put a man to death unjustly. My plea is for you rather than myself. You will not easily find another heaven-sent gadfly to wake you up, so my advice to you is to spare me. If I were not sincere, I would not have neglected myself and my family and lived in poverty to carry out my divine mission.

Why, you may ask, do I act the busybody with individuals like this, but never show my face in the Assembly to give my advice to the City? The reason is that that divine voice of mine,<sup>1</sup> which Meletus caricatured in his indictment, holds me back from politics – and rightly. I should only perish without helping you or myself. Forgive my frankness, but when you or any other popular assembly are bent on some reprehensible policy, no one who sincerely opposes you can survive. A champion of justice must stick to private life.

I can support this by facts, even if it sounds like vulgar special pleading. I opposed you over the generals after Arginusae, when everyone was thirsting for my blood, and under the oligarchy I refused their order to arrest Leon, and would probably have been killed had they not been quickly overthrown. I would never have reached this age if I had been active in public life and stuck to my rule of supporting only what was right and never unjustly favouring anyone, including those falsely called my pupils. I was never anyone's teacher. Whoever wished, young or old, rich or poor, could come and listen to me as I went about my business, and ask me questions. Whether they became better or worse, I am not responsible, for I neither promised nor gave any instruction to anybody. If anyone says he learned anything from me privately, he is lying.

Certainly some people like to spend their time in my company, and I have told you why: what they enjoy is the examination of the pseudo-wise, but this the god has laid upon me by oracles, dreams and every other possible way. If I corrupted anyone who has now grown older and wiser, let him come forward and say so; or let the

<sup>1</sup> For Socrates's divine voice or sign, see vol. III, 402–4.

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fathers and brothers of the corrupted testify. I see plenty of older relatives of my young friends here in court. Why does not Meletus call them? But in fact they are all ready to speak on my behalf.

*Conclusion: no emotional appeals for mercy (34b-35d).* Since it is common practice to beg for mercy, parade one's weeping family and so on, you may think I am stubborn not to do so. It is not that, but whether or not I fear death, I think such behaviour would bring no credit on either myself or the City. It puts us to shame before foreigners, and reputation apart, it is not right. You are not here to show favour, but to judge justly, and it would ill become me, in defending myself against a charge of atheism, to try to make you break your oath. So I leave it to you and God to judge my case as shall be best for all of us.

### *(ii) After the verdict: counter-proposal on penalty<sup>1</sup>*

I am not surprised at your verdict, indeed I thought the majority would be larger. Meletus proposes the death penalty, and I must say what I think I deserve. My crime is to have neglected money, office and political intrigue, and concentrated on doing good to individuals by persuading them not to put their possessions before themselves and their own improvement, nor the City's external prosperity before the City itself. In this I think I have done good, and what is wanted is a suitable return for a needy benefactor, so if I have to propose what is right and just, I suggest maintenance in the Prytaneum.

This too is not arrogance. I am convinced I have wronged nobody, but I cannot persuade you of it in the brief time we have to talk together. If, as in some cities, a capital trial could last for several days, I believe I could, but the slander goes too deep to be eradicated in so short a time. However, being convinced of my innocence, why should I propose a penalty? To escape Meletus's? But I do not even know whether it is a good or a bad thing. I have no wish to live my life in prison, and a fine, with imprisonment until I could pay, would be the same thing. As for exile, if you my fellow-citizens cannot tolerate my ways, I am sure foreigners could not.

<sup>1</sup> See vol. III, 383 f.

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You may say, why can you not just go away and keep quiet? This is the hardest thing of all to convince you of. If I say it would mean disobeying the god, you think I am not serious; and you believe me still less when I say that this examination of oneself and others in discussion is the best thing that could happen to a man, and the unexamined life is not worth living. I would pay a fine if I could because loss of money never hurt anyone. Perhaps I could raise one silver mina, so I will offer that.<sup>1</sup>

Now Plato, Crito and Critobulus tell me to offer thirty minae, and they will be my surety, so I offer that.

### *(iii) After sentence (38c–42a)*

*To those who voted for the death-penalty (38c–39e).* In a little while nature would have done this for you, and saved you the reproach of your enemies, who will say you killed 'the wise Socrates', whether I am wise or not. I have not suffered this sentence for want of arguments in my defence. Arguments I had, but lacked the impudence to grovel and wail before you as others do, and as you want it. I do not regret the defence I made, nor wish to live with a sense of my own disgrace. To escape death is not difficult: as any soldiers know, one has only to run away. To avoid wickedness is harder, for it runs faster. Being old and slow, I have been caught by the slower pursuer, my accusers by the faster. We must each abide by the penalty – which is fair enough.

And I will make a prophecy. By getting rid of me you will not in fact escape from having your lives probed and examined. There will be others, younger and more severe, whom I have kept in check. You cannot escape censure by putting people to death, but only by reforming your own lives.

*To those who voted for acquittal (39e–42a).* Stay and let us talk a little: I have a few minutes' grace while the officials are busy. I want you to know that my fate must be a good one, since my familiar divine sign has not opposed me at any stage. Death can only be one of two

<sup>1</sup> On this offer of Socrates, and its denial by Xenophon, see Burnet on 38b1 and Hackforth, *CPA* 15–17.

## *The Apology*

things: a dreamless sleep or a migration of the soul to another place.<sup>1</sup> I would count either a gain, and if the religious stories are true, and we go to another place where we meet all the dead, nothing could be better. There are the real judges – Minos, Rhadamanthys and the rest – and other interesting people, including fellow-sufferers from unjust judgements, with whom to compare experiences. Best of all would be to continue my questioning, to find out who is wise and who only thinks he is – and at least they cannot put one to death for it there.

So you too must not fear death, but have faith that a good man is never neglected by the gods. I bear my opponents no grudge, but only ask them to pursue my sons as I should have done, if when they grow up they prize money or anything else more than goodness, or think highly of themselves without cause. In that way we shall all have received justice at their hands.

Now we must go, I to death and you to life. Which of us goes to the better lot is known only to God.

### *Comment*

Since so much of the *Apology* was matter for vol. III, it will suffice to consider a few points which, while their occurrence here guarantees them as Socratic, also occur in Plato's other works, where they may be recognized as part of the legacy of Socrates, and Socrates only, to Plato.

*His 'accustomed manner of speaking' (17c).* To disclaim oratorical skill and ask to speak in one's own way may have been a rhetorical cliché, but coming from Socrates it must have sent a shudder down the spine of his accusers. That combination of everyday language with analogies from familiar crafts and occupations – how innocent it sounded, yet how perfectly calculated it was to lead his opponent into hopeless self-contradiction and other logical traps. Again, when he protests that the language of the law-courts is to him like a foreign tongue, it means more than it did from the professionals who used such

<sup>1</sup> On this passage see vol. III, 478 ff.



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protestations as a forensic trick. One is reminded of the passage in the *Theaetetus* (172 cff.) where Plato contrasts the philosopher and the orator and explains why the philosopher will look ridiculous and helpless in a court of law. When Plato speaks of the philosopher as a type, the ideal in his mind is Socrates himself.

An example of his 'usual style' comes soon enough, when at 20a he speaks of discussing the education of Callias's sons in terms of horse- or cattle-breeding, to make his inevitable point that it called for knowledge and skill. Euenos the Sophist is to be congratulated 'if he really does possess this art', just as is Protagoras 'if he really possesses the art' of teaching good citizenship (*Prot.* 319a); whereat Socrates goes on to argue that it is something which cannot be imparted by teaching. In fact the fragment of conversation with Callias is just like the opening of a Platonic dialogue, and we may be sure that Socrates did not let him go without a further dose of questions and criticism. In the interrogation of Meletus we have an actual example of what this could mean, in which once again the analogy with horses appears (25 a).

*The ignorance of Socrates.* His confession that his only claim to knowledge lies in the recognition of his own ignorance is too well known, and its genuineness too impregnable, to need amplification. It recurs in Plato's dialogues down to the *Theaetetus*. (See vol. III, 442 ff.) But we also learn from the *Apology* that this ignorance has its limits (29b): '...but this I do know, that it is bad and dishonourable to do wrong and refuse to obey a better, be he god or man.' Socrates knows, in fact, the truth which the Sophists denied, that there is an objective distinction between right and wrong, there are moral standards not dependent on the differing opinions of this or that individual,<sup>1</sup> and the need to discover them is what makes 'the unexamined life not worth living' (38a). I have suggested that although this conviction had no metaphysical overtones in Socrates's mind, the questions it raised were instrumental in leading Plato to his theory of 'separate' Forms (vol. III, 351-3, 440-2).

<sup>1</sup> Cf. vol. III, 425, 466, 187 n. 3. He also knows that a true opinion is not the same thing as knowledge (*Meno* 98b).

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*The poets divinely inspired* (22*b*–*c*). Socrates's statement here is plainly ironic, since his reason for making it is the inability of poets to understand their own productions. Nor could his best friends claim that he had a poetic side to his nature. But Plato had. He says much about poets, and his ambivalent attitude towards them can be largely explained by the internal conflict between his acquired devotion to the Socratic demand for 'rendering an account' of what you say and the re-emergence of his natural feeling that poetry had a value of its own, independent of its rational or moral content. In the *Ion* the ironic voice of Socrates still prevails, whereas in the *Phaedrus* 'divine madness', of which poetry is one product, is spoken of with genuine sympathy and admiration. The criticism of poets in the *Republic* makes no mention of inspiration, and speaks of them with a strange mixture of disapproval and affection.

'*Care of the soul*' (29*e*). 'Are you not ashamed...to take no care or thought for wisdom (φρόνησις) and truth and the perfecting of the *psyche*?' Like everything worth doing, this 'tendence of the soul' (θεραπεία ψυχῆς) is for Socrates a *technē* (*Laches* 185*e*), and as its association with wisdom and truth would suggest, the *psyche* (usually translated 'soul') is above all the mind, the faculty of reason (vol. III, 469 with n. 3). So it is still for Plato in the *Phaedo*, where the emotions are associated with the body, but in the more developed psychology of the *Republic* they too are assigned to soul, which henceforth has three parts, reason, *thymos* and desire (pp. 474–6 below); but in a properly balanced personality reason rules (as does the undivided *psyche* in the Socratic *Alcibiades I*; vol. III, 472), and it remains the only immortal part, as did the *psyche* when it was still limited to the intellect. In the *Timaeus* too the *psyche* has a mortal as well as an immortal part. The position in the *Phaedrus* and *Laws* 10 is more complex, and has given rise to differences of opinion,<sup>1</sup> but there can be no disagreement about the fact that Plato maintained to the end the Socratic insistence on cultivation and training of the mind as the supreme duty of man. It is that which unites us to the divine, for

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion, see Guthrie, 'Plato's Views on the Nature of the Soul', in *Entretiens Hardt* vol. III.

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wisdom belongs to God (*Apol.* 23a), and as he puts it in the *Phaedrus* (278d), only God is wise (*sophos*) but man can be *philo-sophos*, a striver after wisdom; so in the *Apology* Socrates repeatedly mentions his own *philosophia*, which is something enjoined on him by the god (28e, 29d).

*It is better to suffer evil than to do it.* At 30c–d Socrates says that Meletus and Anytus can do him no harm. They may have him killed or exiled, but he does not think that to suffer such a fate is an evil, at least in comparison with the evil of acting to have a man unjustly put to death. On this belief, that to do evil is worse than to suffer it, and the doer more to be pitied than his victim, depends the dictum that no one sins voluntarily but all wrongdoing is due to ignorance (discussed in vol. III, 459–62). It looks here like a patent misuse of the ambiguous word *kakon* (bad, evil), which could refer either to moral badness ('It was bad of you to refuse your help') or to unpleasant experiences (bad luck, a bad illness): because it is a bad thing to have someone unjustly killed, Socrates assumes that it is bad for the doer. In the *Crito* (49b), by saying that wrongdoing is both *kakon* and disgraceful for the doer, he makes it clear that he is using *kakon* to mean injurious; and the explanation is (47d) that there is a part of a man, more important than his body, which can be injured, even fatally, by such action.

In this way the 'Socratic paradox' that to do wrong is worse than to suffer it is linked with the immediately preceding assertion that a man's proper concern is with the welfare of his *psyche* rather than with his earthly fortunes and reputation. In the circumstances of the trial it would be inappropriate for Socrates to attempt a philosophical defence of these points; indeed as he says himself (37a–b), the time allowed him by Athenian law would not permit such a luxury. He is forced out of his proper role as philosopher into the unaccustomed position of a pleader or orator, one who, as Plato makes him say at *Theaetetus* 172d–e, must speak in a hurry under the pressure of the threatening clock, robbed of the precious gift of leisure which is the prerogative of the philosopher. Here in the *Apology* the nearest to a relevant argument is the purely rhetorical one that he would

## *The Apology*

not corrupt others because to live among bad neighbours is to risk harm to oneself. (Cf. p. 76 n. 1 above.) In the *Meno* (77b–78b) he maintains that no man ever desires evil, whether he recognize it as evil or not. If he does not, then he is not desiring evil but what he believes to be good. If he desires ‘to obtain evil’, it cannot be on the assumption that evils injure their ‘possessor’, for no one wishes harm to himself, so once again he must be reckoned among those who mistake evil for good. As I hope I have shown in a later chapter, this argument achieves its object by a deliberately Sophistic manipulation of the ambiguity of good and bad. The brash naivety of the disciple of Gorgias called for different treatment from that accorded to an old and valued friend like Crito.<sup>1</sup>

The full truth as Socrates saw it is revealed in the *Gorgias*, where the principle that the wrongdoer is more to be pitied than his victim, and more so if he escapes punishment than if he is punished, runs through the whole dialogue. (See 469b, 479e, 508b–e, 527b.) The point is made by extending the concepts of injury and benefit to cover the injury or welfare of the *psyche*. By the analogy of painful remedies for the body, it is shown that punishment is a therapy of the soul, whose disease is wickedness. In this way, without abandoning his theoretically non-moral identification of ‘good’ with ‘useful’ (vol. III, 462–7), Socrates preaches high moral doctrine by arguing that morally bad actions in fact harm their perpetrator because they inevitably injure him in his real self (*psyche*), not simply in externals.<sup>2</sup> Here as in the *Meno* he shows his awareness of the ambiguity of *kakon*, and does not assume, but sets himself to prove, that morally shameful, or disgraceful (αἰσχρόν), and bad (κακόν) are the same (474c–5d).

*The philosopher can take no part in politics* (31c–32a). Taught by the example of Socrates, Plato maintained this all his life. In the *Gorgias* (521d ff.) he makes Socrates dramatically anticipate his own trial and death because he tells the Athenians what is good for them, not what

<sup>1</sup> Some make the point that the confusion was a typically Greek one, illustrated by the familiar ambiguity of εὖ and κακῶς πράττειν. Nevertheless in this argument Socrates (or Plato) knew very well what he was doing, suiting his speech to a young and unphilosophical listener. The point is amplified below, pp. 246f.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Apol.* 36c μήτε τῶν ἑαυτοῦ μηδενὸς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι πρὶν ἑαυτοῦ ἐπιμεληθεῖν; also *Alc. I* 128d, and vol. III, 471.

## *Early Socratic dialogues*

they want to hear. In *Republic* 6 he repeats the points made in the *Apology*, even to the extent of mentioning the personal warning of the divine sign. The multitude will always disapprove of philosophers (494a), and anyone who opposes them in the name of justice will be destroyed before he can be of any service. So the philosopher will act like a traveller sheltering from a storm behind a wall, content to keep himself free from wrongdoing and end his life in serenity with good hope. Later still we have the well-known passage in the *Theaetetus* (172c-176a) contrasting the philosopher with the man of affairs, specifically with the forensic orator, and describing his helplessness in a law-court or any public assembly. We have seen (ch. II above) that it was Plato himself who abandoned a political career for philosophy. Consequently not only are these later references taken to be autobiographical,<sup>1</sup> but even in the *Apology* it is said that here 'Plato appears definitely to renounce his early aspirations after political life' (Adam *ad loc.*, my italics). Hackforth argued for this at some length (*CPA* 117ff.), but not especially cogently. Socrates, he says, must have made his decision in 450-440, and Periclean Athens was not so bad as to have aroused his opposition nor did an honest critic of it go in danger of his life. But the faults of Periclean democracy were scarcely relevant: Socrates's opposition was to democracy itself and its assumption that all were equally capable of taking part in government.<sup>2</sup> In any case, he was speaking in 399, when on trial for his life, and may have seen his motives of forty years earlier in a different light. Plato, says Hackforth (p. 124), did feel that for him a political career would have meant flinging his life away uselessly. 'It was Plato, not Socrates, for whom this danger was real.' A strange thing to say when it was Socrates who was executed. What kept Plato from politics was not only the situation at Athens after 400, but

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Cornford on *Rep.* 496e says (p. 200 of his trans.): 'This last sentence alludes to the position of Plato himself, after he had renounced his early hopes of a political career and withdrawn to his task of training philosophic statesmen in the Academy.' It is curious that he should single out the last sentence, where the mention of the philosopher taking his departure, when the time comes, in serenity and peace is surely a reminder of Socrates.

<sup>2</sup> Hackforth's second point is weakened by a footnote on p. 125: 'It is not to be doubted that thorough-going opposition to a democratic constitution would have been fatal to its advocate, even in the days of Pericles.' 'Thorough-going opposition to a democratic constitution' was exactly Socrates's position.

## *The Crito*

also the example of Socrates, and in the *Republic* he makes him repeat, as if in earlier life, the gist of what he said in his defence, and probably at other times too. There was another reason, also to be found in the *Apology*, why he should tackle his fellow-citizens individually (181a, 31c) instead of speaking in the Assembly: the fulfilment of his mission demanded it. To change men's habits of thought requires personal contact, and for Plato, his heir, philosophy and *dialektikē* (which ordinarily meant conversation) were two names for the same thing.

### (2) THE CRITO

*Date.* The subject of the *Crito* brings it very close to the *Apology*, and it is natural to suppose that it was written about the same time. Nor is there anything in its content to suggest otherwise. Croiset (Budé ed. 210) does not explain why he puts it after the *Euthyphro*,<sup>1</sup> and (though I would be the last to call such arguments conclusive) the philosophy of the *Euthyphro* tempts one to guess that it is the later of the two. There are no historical allusions to give a clue, unless one draws conclusions from the fact that at 53b Thebes and Megara are called well governed, which told Ryle (*P.'s P.* 221) that the work must be well after 370 and Wilamowitz (*Pl.* II, 55 n.) that it cannot be later than 395! That it follows the *Apology* appears from two allusions to it.<sup>2</sup>

*Historicity.* The *Crito* does not record a public trial, but a tête-à-tête between two people, neither of whom was Plato. He could therefore, if he wished, give his imagination freer rein. He could also, if he wished and if the conversation itself is historical, have learned of it from Crito. That Socrates's friends tried to persuade him to escape is attested by Xenophon (*Apol.* 23), and Crito would certainly not be backward among them. The setting therefore lay to hand, but

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps his opening remarks (p. 209) are meant to bear on the date. He says the *Euthyphro* is more closely linked with the *Apology* because it deals with Socrates's religion, whereas 'Le sujet traité par le *Criton* était loin d'avoir la même importance.' This is a very questionable statement.

<sup>2</sup> At 45b (Socrates could not live abroad) and 52c (he chose death rather than exile). Cf. *Apol.* 37d and 30c. This is more probable than that both are independent references to Socrates's actual defence rather than Plato's account of it.

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a reading of the dialogue suggests that Plato has taken advantage of the privacy of the conversation to compose a miniature masterpiece, entirely in the Socratic spirit, to explain why, after defying the laws for conscience sake in his public defence, Socrates could yet show himself, with perfect consistency, obedient to them when condemned to death; a work which reveals, more cogently than the somewhat rambling court speech, the steadfast principles by which his life was ruled.

*Crito*. Crito was a contemporary of Socrates (*Apol.* 33e) and a lifelong friend, from the same deme, Alopekē. His sons also followed Socrates, with their father's goodwill. In the *Euthydemus* (306d) we hear him consulting Socrates about the education of one of them, Critobulus, who was with him at the trial (*Apol.* 33e, 38b) and also in Socrates's last hours (*Phaedo* 59b). He was a wealthy man, who wished to help Socrates with his money both at the trial (*Apol.* 38b) and later for any expenses involved in securing his escape. (For further information and references see Croiset, Budé ed. of *Crito*, 211-13, and Burnet, ed. of *Crito* 172f.)

### *The dialogue*

#### *(Direct dramatic form)*

The *Crito* presents a very different scene from the *Apology*: instead of a crowded, noisy court, the silence of the prison before dawn, where Socrates lies alone and asleep. A single friend enters and sits beside him, unwilling to break his rest. Soon Socrates awakes, and gently chides Crito for not waking him, and Crito marvels at the equable way in which he accepts his plight. Crito brings bad news. The sacred ship, on whose return from Delos all executions must wait, has been sighted at Sunium and will probably arrive that day. Socrates thinks it will be a day later, for he is to die on the morrow of its arrival, and he has just dreamed of a white-clad woman who, adapting Achilles's words in Homer (*Il.* 9.363), told him 'On the third day thou canst reach deep-soiled Phthia', i.e. the homeland.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle in his dialogue *Eudemus* borrowed much from the *Phaedo*, and this touch, it would seem, from the *Crito*. In a dream a beautiful youth prophesied to Eudemus, among other things which duly came to pass, that after five years he would return home. Five years later he

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C. Too plain a dream, I fear. Now listen to me and make your escape. If you refuse, I shall not only lose an incomparable friend but be thought to have refused to help you through meanness.

S. No one whose opinion is worth anything will think that.

C. But the others can do a lot of harm.

S. Not they: if they could they could do good too, but they can't make a man either wise or foolish.

C. That's as may be. Anyway, don't worry that your friends may be blackmailed by informers – that's our business – nor that (as you said in court) you could not live abroad. I have good friends in Thessaly. If you are obstinate, you will do just what your enemies want, and also be deserting your sons. It will reflect no credit on you any more than on your friends. This is no time for argument: we must act tonight.

S. Dear Crito, I do appreciate your concern. But are you right? It has always been my practice to act only on the argument that, after reflection, seems to me best. I can't abandon this rule just because of what has happened. Take your point about public opinion. We used to maintain that the opinions of some should be heeded and others not. Has my approaching death shown that this was wrong?

C. No.

S. Well, it meant heeding the opinions of the wise, because they are good for us, and not the foolish, which are harmful. I used to employ illustrations from training or medicine<sup>1</sup> showing that one must trust only the expert, or one's body would suffer, and apply them to moral qualities: to trust the ignorant many instead of the one expert is to ruin that part of us which is improved by right actions and harmed by wrong. The many may put us to death, but it is only the good life, not life itself, that we should care about. Money, reputation and children are not the main considerations, but only whether to run away would be *right*. That is what we must decide, so answer my questions frankly. Refute me if you can: I don't want to

was in Sicily with Dion, and naturally hoped for a chance to return to his native Cyprus. Actually he was killed in the fighting. So the dream was interpreted to mean that, once released from the body, his soul had found its true home. (Cic. *De div.* 1.25.53.)

<sup>1</sup> *Gorg.* 479a–c is an instance, and there are many others.



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act against your convictions. But if you cannot, please stop urging me to go.

Have we not always agreed that to do wrong is bad for the doer as well as disgraceful, and to be avoided in *all* circumstances, whatever the consequences? This includes requiting an injury, and the few who believe and the many who deny it have no common ground, but will always despise each other's views.<sup>1</sup> So think carefully whether you agree that this is the right starting-point.

C. Yes, I stick to it as our joint conviction.

S. Then one should fulfil one's lawful agreements, and the question in my case is: if I go away without the city's consent, am I fulfilling a fair agreement or do I wrong those whom above all I should treat rightly?

C. I don't know the answer.

S. Well, suppose the State and its laws could talk to me like this: 'Your plan will go as far as one man can towards destroying us, for no society can survive if its lawful judgements are to have no force but be nullified by the actions of private individuals.' Should I reply: 'But the City's verdict did me an injustice'?

C. Indeed yes.

S. Then the laws might go on: 'But was this your agreement with us? Was it not rather to abide by the City's verdicts whatever they be? Does any complaint justify destroying the laws under whose protection you were born, nurtured, educated and given all the benefits of citizenship? Circumstances have not made us equals; you are our own child and servant.<sup>2</sup> The authority of one's country is more to be respected than a father's. Whether it punish you or send you to risk your life in battle, it must be everywhere obeyed, unless you can change its view of what is naturally just. Moreover we leave every citizen free to go and live elsewhere, taking his property,<sup>3</sup> if

<sup>1</sup> This truth is dramatized by Plato in the bitter and fruitless encounter between Socrates and Calicles in the *Gorgias*.

<sup>2</sup> For the idea of citizens as slaves (δοῦλοι) of the law in Greek thought generally, as well as elsewhere in Plato, see the interesting note of Milobenski, *Gymn.* 1968, 384 n. 29, and cf. especially Herodotus's story of Demaratus (vol. III, 69).

<sup>3</sup> Gomme (*G. and R.* 1958, 47) notes that a citizen of Athens had the advantage over one in the modern free world, who has to ask for a passport and can in practice be prevented from emigrating by not being allowed to take his property with him. As Bernard Levin wrote in

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he dislikes the ways and laws of Athens. By living your whole life and begetting children here, you have shown your satisfaction with us, and this, we claim, constitutes an agreement to do our bidding or else, as we allow (for our orders are proposals, not brutal commands), persuade us otherwise. Even at your trial you could have chosen exile, but boasted that you preferred death. Now like the meanest slave you want to run away in breach of your freely chosen agreement with us. This will do no good to yourself or your friends. They will risk heavy penalties, and you will be suspect in any law-abiding city, having justified the court's opinion of you as a corrupter of youth. In an undisciplined state you would hardly wish to live. Thessaly is such, its citizens would no doubt be amused by the story of your escape in disguise; but unless you curried favour with them you would soon have to endure some humiliating remarks. And what would have happened to all your talk about virtue and justice? And your children? Would you take them with you to be brought up as foreigners? Or leave them here in the care of friends? True friends will look after them no worse if your migration is to Hades rather than Thessaly.

'This is our advice as your guardians: put neither life nor children before the right. It is not we who will have wronged you but your fellow-men. If you break our agreement and return wrong for wrong, you will face our anger while you live, and our brothers in Hades will not receive you kindly when you die.'

To my present way of thinking, nothing else can stand against these words; but if you can urge anything against them, do so.

C. I have nothing to say.

S. Then let us act accordingly, for this is the way God leads.

### *Comment*

The *Crito* is best read for its own sake, as an incomparable document of the Socratic spirit, complementing the *Apology* by showing how Socrates, while upholding his own right to live and speak in a way

*The Times* of 28 December 1971, 'A very precise estimate of the nature of a country and its political system can be made by applying one simple test: how easy is it for its inhabitants to leave?' Plato's approval, at this stage, of Athenian democracy is noteworthy.

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which brought him into conflict with the laws of Athens, asserted equally strongly their right to do with him as they pleased. Peaceful persuasion was the only permissible weapon against them. His position is curiously like that which Plato attributes to Protagoras both in the myth of the *Protagoras* and in the 'defence' which he puts in his mouth in the *Theaetetus* (166a ff.), where the *nomoi* of a city represent justice in it until a wise man or good orator persuade it otherwise, for the reason that contravention of the laws, whether violent or not, would undermine society, and society was necessary for man's survival.

Central to the argument is the certainty that there is something in us which is more important than the body, and which is harmed, not by injuries inflicted by others, but by a wrong committed by ourselves (47d), so that wrongdoing is bad for the doer as well as shameful (49b). In the *Apology* we saw Socrates urging this 'care of the soul' on his fellow citizens; here he practises it himself in the face of death. The Socratic analogy of bodily health (47b-48a) prepared the way for the notion of *harmonia*, or a right ordering of parts, as the basis of health in soul as well as body, which Plato develops in the *Gorgias* and *Republic*.

With the analogy of the doctor goes the injunction to trust only the one expert, not the ignorant many. This, Gomme complained (*G. and R.* 1958, 45), ignores the knotty problem of whether there *are* experts in right and wrong as there are in medicine or engineering; and Grote (*Pl.* I, 308) accuses Socrates of taking the part of expert on himself, in spite of his regular protestations of ignorance, and also (307) of requiring us to do what he is fond of blaming others for doing, namely determine what is right or wrong in a particular case as if we already knew what right and wrong, justice and injustice, *are*. (Cf. vol. III, 431 f.) Gomme's complaint simply calls into question the whole basis of Socratic ethics. Of course Socrates believed there were experts in right and wrong conduct: that was what 'virtue is knowledge' meant, it explained his distrust of democracy, and he was ready to uphold it at any time by the argument of analogy with the crafts.

As for Grote's points, we have already seen from the *Apology* that

his ignorance had its limitations (p. 88 above), and he was fond of saying that however many people might assert something, it was he, and he alone, who had to be convinced if he was to agree with them. (Examples are *Gorg.* 471eff., *H. Maj.* 298b.) This admittedly is not the same as claiming to know not only *that* there is a distinction between right and wrong but *what* it is. It may be that when an immediate practical choice had to be made (in this case between life and death) Socrates (or Plato on his behalf) did not act perfectly consistently with this claim to know nothing. What was essential to him was that the decision should be the outcome of logical argument, the 'common search' (46d, 48d) in which he must get his partner's agreement first to the premises (τῆς σκέψεως τὴν ἀρχὴν 48e) and then to each step in the argument. In method at least, he is the 'one expert', and also in knowledge of one thing: that conduct must be justifiable by universally applicable arguments rather than a narrow interpretation of one's personal interests and safety.

Then there is the dramatic situation. Plato is showing us Socrates in the last two days of a long life devoted to innumerable discussions with Crito himself and other friends on precisely these questions of the nature of right and wrong. He says explicitly and repeatedly (46d, 47b, 49a) that in laying down the premises of his argument Socrates is relying on the results of these previous discussions, which had not been entirely negative. Only a reminder to Crito is needed, whereas in applying their agreed principles to his present case (49eff.) he has to take him through an argument step by step. What Socrates and Crito 'know' includes: that the welfare of the soul is more important than that of the body, that doing wrong is injurious to the soul, and that breaking a lawful contract freely entered into is wrong. What has to be demonstrated is that in the present case Socrates would be breaking such a contract. This is done through the mouth of the personified laws, and it follows that escape would save his body at the expense of his soul. ('Our brothers in Hades will not receive you kindly.')

When Crito says that one must not ignore the views of the many because they are capable of doing great harm, Socrates replies (44d), 'Would that they could, for then they would be able to do great good

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also!' This is hardly self-explanatory, but Crito would know that it was one of the conclusions drawn by Socrates from his belief that knowledge is the prerequisite of right action in every sphere; the same knowledge can be turned to the contrary evil much more effectively than by anyone untrained. The doctor who can best cure diseases is best equipped to bring sickness on an enemy by stealth, the man trained in self-defence is trained also to assault, the best policeman is also the best burglar, knowing exactly how locks are picked and safes blown. This is expounded in the *Republic* (333e–334b), and the *Hippias Minor* is devoted to proving that the deceiver and the true man are the same (no one ignorant of arithmetic could be so sure of giving the wrong answer as Hippias the skilled mathematician) and that anyone who is voluntarily and knowingly wicked is a better man than he who does wrong in ignorance. (After leading Hippias through a maze of tortuous and fallacious argument, Socrates slips in 'if there be such a man' (376b), and we all know that he does not believe voluntary wrongdoing is possible.) This reveals a defect in the simple Socratic analogy between virtue and the arts and crafts, which was overcome by Plato with his own view of it as a healthy *harmonia* of the soul and by Aristotle who saw it as, not a capacity, but a settled state acquired by practice.<sup>1</sup>

Croiset (Budé 214f.) thinks it difficult for a modern mind to understand why Socrates should suppose that by breaking prison he would be wronging his country, and explains it on historical grounds: in his time exiles were normally members of defeated political parties, who betook themselves to places where their sympathizers were in power and became conspirators against their own cities. Only the enemies of Athens would have opened their gates to him, and that on condition that he came as a hostile critic of the Athenian constitution. This may be true, but it is not the reason Socrates gives. The mere fact of disobedience, he says, goes as far towards subverting the laws as one man can (τὸ σὸν μέρος, 50b), 'for how can a state survive, and not be overturned, if its enacted judgements have no force but are

<sup>1</sup> ̐̐̐̐̐, *EN* 1106b36; acquired by ̐̐̐̐̐, 1103a17, 25–6. At 1137a17 he expressly criticizes the doctrine that the just man is *ipso facto* unjust, because he is better qualified than anyone else to act in either way. For the *Hippias Minor* see pp. 192ff. below.

## *The Euthyphro*

nullified and torn up by private individuals?' It is the first appearance of a question sometimes discussed by philosophers today, namely whether, as a rule of conduct, one should ask oneself: 'What would happen if everyone behaved like me?'

NOTE. The following points from the *Crito* occur in vol. III: Crito says the case need never have come to court (45e), 383; the 'common search' (46d, 48d), 449 n. 1; we must not do wrong willingly (49a), 460 n. 2; nor return wrong for wrong (49b and c), 113; the compact between Socrates and the laws (50c, 52d), 140, 143; Socrates could have chosen exile had he wished (52c), 384; Megara and Thebes as places where he could have gone (53b), 499; Thessaly full of disorder and wickedness (53d), 301 n. 3; Socrates wronged not by the laws themselves but by their application (54b), 146.

### (3) THE EUTHYPHRO

On the genuineness of this dialogue one need only say that the arguments of those who in the last century questioned it (which may be found in Adam's edition xxv-xxxi) form a remarkable exhibition of the perversities of which the human mind is capable.

*Date.* There is no external evidence. Style and content both put it among the earlier dialogues, but within this limit opinions diverge. Bluck (*PLT* 61) is probably the only recent writer to suggest (as earlier did Schleiermacher, Stallbaum, Steinhart, Ritter and Zeller) that it might have been written between the prosecution and trial of Socrates, a thesis which Grote found incredible.<sup>1</sup> Hackforth (*CPA* 51-3) supposed it to have been written before the *Apology*, Croiset (Budé 177) put it confidently ('Tout nous autorise à penser...') shortly after it, about 396 or 395, Adam (ed. xxxi) thought it 'considerably later than the *Crito*', and for von Arnim (*Jugendd.* 141) its argument presupposed that of the *Lysis* and it was even later than the *Protagoras*. (See p. 106 n. 2 below.) Von Arnim, like others, was influenced by its use of language generally associated with the 'theory of Ideas', but it is by no means certain that this terminology meant

<sup>1</sup> *Pl.* 1, 316 n. 2. Grote's argument was that it would have made Socrates's position at his trial much worse. The others argued that Plato speaks of the trial in a light, satirical tone which would have been impossible for him after the sentence!

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the same for Plato here as it came to mean in later dialogues. Particulars of differing opinions on this will be found in Hoerber's article (*Phron.* 1958, 100), and even this brief and partial survey of attempts to place the dialogue chronologically should make us agree with him in enjoining caution and deprecating dogmatism on such scanty evidence. The latest commentator, R. E. Allen (*P.'s Euthyphro etc.* 1970, 1 f.), finds it 'enough to know that the *Euthyphro* was probably written in the first decade of the fourth century, when Plato was in his thirties'.

*Dramatic date.* The setting is still within the period of Socrates's prosecution, trial and death. Socrates has come to the King's Stoa for preliminary business in connexion with Meletus's indictment. In imagination therefore the scene follows immediately on the conversation in the *Theaetetus*, at the end of which Socrates leaves for this same appointment. This can have no bearing on the date of composition, but Hoerber (*l.c.* 107) suggests that the reminder of the *Euthyphro* is deliberate because of a similarity in religious tenets (comparing *Theaet.* 176a-c).

Euthyphro is prosecuting his father for an incident which occurred when they were farming in Naxos (4c), and commentators have not been slow to point out that this must have been before Athens lost Naxos in 404, five years before the trial of Socrates. This has sometimes been thought to be an artistic anachronism, though Burnet, in a learned note, held that contemporary circumstances made the delay natural.<sup>1</sup>

*Euthyphro.* Euthyphro is unknown outside the pages of Plato, where he appears again (*Crat.* 396d) as of the deme Prospalte.<sup>2</sup> His character

<sup>1</sup> Artistic anachronism: 'The creative moment came when Plato brought these two events together to show how they reflect upon each other, and then unfolded the problem of "piety" against this double background.' (Friedlander, *Pl.* II, 283; similarly Leisegang, *RE* 2406.) For Burnet's solution see p. 25 of his ed. Wilamowitz (II, 76) took the anachronism as evidence for the historical reality of the incident: if it had been imaginary Plato would have avoided the difficulty. Allen (*Euth.* 21 n. 3), like Adam (ed. 49f.), thinks it may have been possible for Euthyphro and his father to stay on in Naxos after 404, and stresses the aspect of religious pollution as providing the only means of bringing the case under the jurisdiction of an Athenian court. Hoerber (*Phron.* 1958, 97), accepting the five-year gap, looks to the pollution danger to account for it: Euthyphro's superstitious fears for himself and his father grew on him with the years.

<sup>2</sup> The identity has been doubted, but it is highly unlikely that Socrates knew two religious fanatics of the name. In the *Crat.* (396d, 399a, 428c) S. speaks of him ironically as a man divinely

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is incomparably drawn by Plato, and I will not spoil a reader's pleasure by enlarging on it. He is commonly regarded as, in Leisegang's words (*RE* 2406), 'the type of a genuine and dangerous piety, the same that cost Socrates his life. . . a fanatical zealot for orthodoxy'. But this hardly fits what we are told, as Burnet pointed out (ed. 5 f.). He bemoans the way he is misunderstood and ridiculed in the Assembly, knows nothing of Socrates's approaching trial, and greets him as a fellow-sufferer for his beliefs. In fact, as Jowett says (I, 306), 'he is not a bad man, and he is friendly to Socrates whose familiar sign he recognizes with interest'.

### *The dialogue<sup>1</sup>*

#### *(Direct dramatic form)*

Euthyphro meets Socrates outside the office of the magistrate responsible for religious offences. He is surprised to see S. in such unusual surroundings, so S. explains the charges which Meletus has brought against him. E. connects them with the 'divine sign', and treats him as a fellow-religious, suffering like himself from misunderstanding: his own prophecies are laughed at by the Assembly. S. thinks he may have more to fear than ridicule, and E. says comfortingly that perhaps his case will end favourably, as he believes his own will.

What then is E.'s business? Prosecuting his own father for the manslaughter of a slave who had murdered a fellow-slave, by leaving him bound in a ditch and neglecting him. E.'s family think his proceedings impious, so little do they know the divine mind on questions of piety and impiety.

This, S. thinks, argues great confidence in his own rightness, and E. agrees that he thoroughly understands these things. If then, says S., he can become E.'s pupil, he can challenge Meletus on this authority,

possessed, from whom he himself has caught the inspiration. At *Euth.* 3 e he calls him a μάγιστρος, and Euthyphro himself has just mentioned his power of foretelling the future. Taylor (*PMW* 77 n. 1) solemnly points out that the *Euthyphro* does not suggest that he was subject to possession. He was hardly on business that called for it, nor was it easy for anyone to display his mediumistic powers while undergoing the Socratic elenchus.

<sup>1</sup> See also, for a helpful summary in terms of modern analysis, R. S. Meyer, *P.'s E.: an example of philosophical analysis*, 1963.



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and if Meletus still thinks him wrong, he should prosecute the teacher rather than the pupil. E. agrees that, in that case, he would be more than a match for Meletus.

S. is confirmed in his wish to learn from E., and asks him to explain what he knows so well, that is, 'what sort of thing is the pious<sup>1</sup> and the impious, for surely they are the same in every action, each consistent with itself and the contrary of the other, and possessing a single form or character (*idea*)'. E. agrees, and S. repeats his question in the more accurate form:<sup>2</sup> 'What do you say is the pious and what the impious?' E. replies that the pious is what he is doing now, generalizing this into 'proceeding against anyone guilty of killing, stealing sacred objects or the like'. Not to do this is impiety. The actions of the gods, E. claims, prove him right. Zeus, called best and justest of the gods, bound his own father Cronus because he had swallowed his other sons, and Cronus castrated his for a similar reason. S. asks whether he really believes these stories of the gods, and others about their quarrels and fighting. He does – and many others that he can relate.

Another time then, says S. hastily, but meanwhile his question is unanswered. Other things are pious besides punishing the guilty. E. has agreed that acts are pious or impious by reason of a single form, so let him say what that form itself is. Then it can be used as a standard (παράδειγμα) by which to judge whether individual actions are pious or not. E. is ready to oblige, and states that what is pleasing to the gods is pious and what is not is impious. But his own belief in the old myths lands him at once in difficulty: if the gods disagree and quarrel, then like men they will certainly differ over what is right or wrong, unless there is some independent standard to test them against, as with things that can be counted, measured or weighed. The same

<sup>1</sup> As with other Greek moral terms, no single word spans τὸ ὅσιον exactly. Holiness, piety, righteousness, religious duty, religion have all been suggested. As E. says at 12e, it was generally thought to cover all right conduct concerning one's obligations to the gods. For this, 'piety' seems as near as one can get.

<sup>2</sup> In later dialogues the questions τί ἐστίν and ὁποῖόν τι are contrasted, and it is emphasized that one must know of anything τί ἐστίν before one can properly ask ὁποῖόν τι, i.e. agree on a general definition of it before asking whether it has a particular characteristic, e.g. of virtue whether it is teachable. Cf. *Meno* 71b, 100b, *Prot.* 361c, *Gorg.* 448e. Here however the slight correction is made with no special significance.

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thing therefore seems right (and so is pleasing) to some gods, wrong and hateful to others, and so is both pious and impious.<sup>1</sup>

E. objects that no god would maintain that wrongful killing should go unpunished. Agreed. Men too accept the *principle* that wrongdoing should always be punished. A defendant does not claim that though guilty he ought to go free: he claims that he is not guilty of the offence. How does E. know that all the gods would agree that his father killed unjustly and his own action is therefore right? Granted however that they would (for E. says he could prove it, given enough time), ought they to amend their statement simply by saying that what *all* the gods love is pious and vice versa, whereas what some love and some hate is neither or both?

E. thinks this is right, but agrees to examine the answer further, and S. poses a crucial question: Is what is pious pious because loved by the gods, or loved by the gods because it is pious? Euthyphro does not understand, and S. explains by pointing out that the relation between active and passive is not symmetrical but one of cause and effect. A thing-being-carried (present participle passive) is such because someone is carrying it,<sup>2</sup> and not vice versa. In general, what is acted upon is so because someone or something acts upon it; the doer does not act because the object suffers its action. We cannot therefore say that the gods love what is pious because it is something-loved-by-the-gods;

<sup>1</sup> As Adam points out, this objection would not have worried Protagoras. Cf. vol. III, 171. But S. has already got E. to agree that piety and impiety are contraries (5d).

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to distinguish in English between *φερόμενόν ἐστι* and *φέρεται* (10b). Indeed, the distinction which S. here draws for his own purposes is somewhat artificial in Greek. Plato himself came to use the periphrastic form as a synonym for the simple verb. So *Laws* 822e *τιθεμένων εἶναι* for *τίθεσθαι*, 821d *ἔχοντά ἐστι* for *ἔχει*. Campbell quotes examples from *Soph.* and *Pol.* (*S. and P.* xxxiv; not exhaustive) to show that it was a mark of his later style. Note however *γινώσκων ἐσται* at *Charm.* 169e and *ἐστίν*... *διαφέρων* at *Gorg.* 500c, and cf. Goodwin, *M. and T.* paras. 45, 830 and R. A. Cobb in *Phron.* 1973, 82f. To represent *φέρεται* by the active voice, as above, does not affect the argument. J. H. Brown (*PQ* 1964, 12) says: 'That *X* is carried by someone is the same as that someone carries *X*, not a causal consequence of it.' In spite of this, it is curiously tempting to say that 'he was hit because something hit him' is not obvious nonsense, whereas 'something hit him because he was hit' is. In any case, it is a premise of S.'s argument here that this is so. Perhaps Plato's contrast of pass. indic. with participle instead of active with passive disguised, if it did not relieve him of, this difficulty. For something to *be* in a state depending on an action (carried, loved), it must be put, and sustained, in that state. There must, as Aristotle would say, be an efficient cause in act. Cf. Jowett<sup>4</sup> 1, 305 and 307. ('The act precedes the state.') On the logic of the whole passage see S. M. Cohen in *JHPH* 1971, esp. pp. 3-8. It has caused a great fuss, and reff. to other discussions will be found in T. D. Paxson jr., *Phron.* 1972, 171-90.

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rather its being loved is the consequence of their loving it, and the reason for their loving it must be sought elsewhere. Is it because it is pious? Yes, says E. Then to be pious cannot be the same thing as to be loved by the gods, or our argument would be circular. We have learned a *pathos* (affection, something undergone) of the pious – that the gods like it – but not what it is, its essence.

At this point E. gives up. The arguments are going round and round and will not stay still. S. seems to have the power, like Daedalus, of making things (in this case *logoi*) that move on their own. S. assures him it is not intentional and, since E. is unwilling, he will make a suggestion himself. Everything pious is right, but the proposition is not convertible (this logical point has to be explained to E. with an illustration) because 'right' has a wider extension: 'the pious' is a sub-class (in Plato's language a part) of the wider class 'right'. What then is its differentia? E. thinks piety is the part of right conduct concerned with service to the gods, the rest dealing with duties to our fellow-men.

So far so good, but we must be more precise. What kind of service, and to what end? Sometimes our service<sup>1</sup> (e.g. to our horses and dogs) is for the benefit and improvement of its object,<sup>2</sup> but this cannot be so with the gods. E. suggests it is the kind of service that slaves render to their masters. At this point S. introduces his favourite analogy with the crafts by suggesting that service, ministration and the like usually go towards the *production* of something. What do the gods produce with the aid of our ministrations, as farmers produce

<sup>1</sup> Again we are faced with the difficulty of a Greek word having a different coverage from any English one. *Therapeia*, here translated 'service', also covers tendance or care for anything. Of gods it means worship, of cattle tendance, of buildings maintenance, in medicine (where we have retained the Greek word) therapy. S.'s insistence on this kind of precision may have been stimulated by the teaching of Prodicus on *ὀνομάτων ὁρθότης*. See vol. III, 275 f.

<sup>2</sup> Von Arnim (*Jugendd.* 147) argues that because the transition from *ὠφελίσθαι* to *βελτίους γίνεσθαι* at 13b is not expressly substantiated, the passage presupposes *Rep.* 335b and *Euth.* must be a later work than *Rep.* 1. Such a fine-toothed comb should not be used on Plato: the transition may equally well mean that he thought it at the time a natural one. Arn. makes a similar point with regard to the *Protagoras*: it also is earlier because (a) at 329c–330a the same logical point is made as at *Euth.* 11e ff., but with less 'logische Scharfe'; (b) *Euth.* 12d is a correction of *Prot.* 331b, where Socrates says *ἴσιον* is the same as *δικαίον* or very like it. The position in *Prot.* is more subtle. Protagoras is allowed to correct S., and the point is abandoned unresolved. Such comparisons afford no good evidence for dating.

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food, architects buildings,<sup>1</sup> doctors health and generals victory? 'Many fine things', says E., but when pressed to be more definite complains that to give a full account of these high matters is not the work of a moment. Briefly however, if one knows how to please the gods by prayer and sacrifice, that is piety, and what it effects is the salvation of individuals and communities. It is then (says S. with E.'s agreement) a science of prayer and sacrifice, making requests to them and giving them gifts, a knowledge of how to ask rightly for what we need and to give them what they need from us – an art of mutual commerce.

But how can gods be benefited by any gifts from us? They are not, replies E.; it is a matter of giving them honour, respect and pleasure – after which it is easy for S. to get him to repeat in so many words that the pious is what is pleasing to the gods. So the argument has come full circle. Either our present or our earlier conclusion must be wrong, and we must start again from the beginning. At this point E. remembers an urgent engagement, and S. is left lamenting the loss of an opportunity to confute Meletus by hearing from E., who understands such matters so well, what true religion and irreligion are.

### *Comment*

The *Euthyphro* exemplifies splendidly how much we gain from Plato's art of writing philosophy not simply in dialogue form, but as a clash of contrasting personalities realistically portrayed in a situation of high dramatic intensity. A philosophical dialogue on the nature of piety does not sound a particularly enticing prospect; but the prospect changes as we watch Socrates, in the early stages of his own trial for impiety and on the threshold of the magistrate who will deal with it, fall into conversation with a dogmatic, if self-styled and somewhat eccentric religious authority, and, in the guise of seeking help with his own defence, make it plain that he does not know what he is

<sup>1</sup> There is a remarkable coincidence of language between 13e-14a and 1 Cor. 3.9, θεοῦ γὰρ ἔσμεν συνεργοί· θεοῦ γέωργιον, θεοῦ οἰκοδομή ἔσμεν. In this Christian view also we are co-producers with God, and what God produces with our aid, analogous to the architects' building and the farmer's crop, is ourselves. The negative conclusion about ὑπηρετική here should not make us forget that Socrates knew very well what his own τῷ θεῷ ὑπηρεσία was, namely to persuade men into self-improvement, the improvement of their ψυχαί (Apol. 30a-b).

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talking about. And if this is true of Euthyphro, who claims to 'know precisely about all such matters' (5a), it is not likely to be less true of the 'young and unknown' Meletus (2b).

The dialogue, like most, raises points of interest in a number of different fields.

(i) *The Socratic method*. At 4eff. Socrates accepts Euthyphro at his own valuation and declares that if he can sit at the feet of so wise a man he will be able to confound Meletus. Since he has already (2c) characterized Meletus as a 'wise man' who has seen through his own 'ignorance', he is putting them on the same footing;<sup>1</sup> and we know his real opinion of Meletus (*Apol.* 24c). Both are examples of those who 'think they know what they do not' (*ib.* 21d), and we are to see how Socrates, following the god's command, set about showing such men that they were not wise (*ib.* 23b). It is a classic example of the Socratic elenchus. First, the respondent is confident of his understanding of a moral term (4e-5a; cf. *Laches* 190c, *Meno* 71e). Asked to define it, he replies unhesitatingly, but is shown that his first attempt (here 'prosecuting those guilty of religious offences') mentions only a particular instantiation of the quality, not the characteristic common to all actions agreed to possess it. (See 6d. The same stage is reached at *Laches* 191a ff. and *Meno* 72a ff.) He sees the point, offers a general description ('pleasing to the gods') which has to be amended ('pleasing to *all* the gods') but even so is shown to be unsatisfactory (in this case as naming only a *pathos* of the subject, something that happens to it, instead of saying what it is).

The elenchus has now done its work, and the victim is reduced to silence. ('I cannot say what is in my mind', 11b; at *Laches* 194b, Laches says exactly the same.) Nothing that he says will stay in its place, which prompts Socrates to call himself an unwilling Daedalus. At the same stage in the *Meno* (79e-80b) Meno complains that Socrates has numbed his mind like a sting-ray or a magician, and just as here, Socrates attributes it to his own inadequacy. Later (97d) the

<sup>1</sup> E. also resembles M. in being one who *ῥαδίως εἰς ἀγῶνας καθίστησιν ἀνθρώπους* (*Apol.* 24c; Grote, *Pl.* 1, 330).

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Daedalus-figure itself recurs to make the point that opinions never will stand still until firmly anchored by that 'calculation of the reason why' which converts them into knowledge.

To reanimate the discussion, Socrates himself makes a suggestion (11e), parallel to his introduction of the doctrine of recollection in *Meno* and the equation of courage and knowledge in *Laches*, where the positive Socratic contribution is introduced in a neat literary variation by Nicias suddenly remembering something he has often heard Socrates say. This leads to a new definition, which though based on his own suggestion, also fails to stand up to examination, and the dialogue is broken off in apparent failure. That the interlocutor has been taught several lessons in methodical thinking is certain. Whether the ostensibly negative result conceals a positive message is much disputed.

(ii) *Religion*. In early Greece, the killing of a man brought automatic pollution (*miasma*) on the killer and his whole family, and on the dead man's family until they had done all they could to avenge his death. In this respect there was no difference between deliberate and accidental killing, and although by the time of Socrates the law, and the ideas behind it, had moved considerably in a more rational and civilized direction, the old superstitions had not died. There were different courts for murder, accidental killing, and killing sanctioned by law, yet there was also another for trying the stone or weapon with which the killing was effected, if it were accidental (say a coping-stone falling on a man) or if the user were not known.<sup>1</sup> In the popular mind the idea of religious pollution, only removable by purificatory rites of which Apollo was the orderer and dispenser, was still strong. Euthyphro represents this transitional stage, with strongly conservative leanings. His purpose in offending his family by prosecuting his own father is primarily to avert *miasma*, yet he is capable of saying that this is unaffected by the question whether the killer is or is not 'one at your own table and hearth', but depends solely on whether or not he had right on his side (4b-c). He shows his conservatism even more strikingly in his naïve acceptance of the Homeric and Hesiodic

<sup>1</sup> See Guthrie, *G. and G.* 191 ff. and cf. ancient sources esp. *Dem.* 23.65-76.

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tales of strife and hatred among the gods, of Cronus castrating Uranus and Zeus putting Cronus in chains. By the end of the fifth century there must have been few such fundamentalists left among thinking people, and Socrates was scarcely showing himself ahead of his time in expressing surprise.<sup>1</sup>

In saying that whatever is pleasing to the gods is *ipso facto* pious, Euthyphro was closer to the opinion of at least the majority of Athenians. So long as any belief in an anthropomorphic polytheism survives, gods will be thought of as capricious beings, whose favour will depend on our fulfilling their wishes, and the main part of religious duty will consist in the difficult task of discovering what they do want in order to give it to them – a kind of commercial transaction, as Socrates calls it. By making Euthyphro reverse this definition he indicates the need for a standard of piety independent of the gods' will, and by his own positive contribution – that piety is a part of righteousness or justice (τὸ δίκαιον) – expresses his conviction that the standard is a moral one.<sup>2</sup>

The implications of this question have exercised philosophers and theologians through the Middle Ages and down to the present day. For some references see Taylor, *PMW* 151 and Hoerber, *Phron.* 1958, 102 n. 1. The opinion of Duns Scotus is summarized in *Ency. Phil.* 11, 435. (On this however see Coplestone in *R. of Metaph.* 23 (1969–70), 308f.) On the contrasting views of Hobbes and Leibniz see Flew, *Introd. to W. Phil.* 28–33. Flew himself discusses the question in *God and Philosophy* 109f., starting, as in the *Introduction*, from Plato's *Euthyphro*. Of the two alternatives he points out that the first (that action is pious or right because willed by the gods, or God)

<sup>1</sup> For criticism of such stories from Xenophanes to Euripides see vol. III, 226–30. When S. suggests that he may owe his prosecution to his unwillingness to accept them he is speaking *ad hominem* and teasing E.: 'Of course I know nothing about such things' (6a–b). Yet the old poets were still a part of children's education, which aroused Plato's protest in the *Rep.* (377b–378e). Cf. also Tate in *CQ* 1933.

<sup>2</sup> Grote (*Pl.* 1, 328) says that Plato's Socrates, in demanding a universal εἶδος of δεισιον, does not square with Xenophon's. He quotes *Mem.* 1.3.1. The point is further elaborated at 4.3.16–17, which should be read carefully. Xenophon certainly did not see all of S. that Plato did, but even here there may be hints (lost on Euthydemus) of the truth in Croiset's description of S.'s own religion (Budé 183): 'religion essentiellement morale, désireuse de s'accommoder des formes traditionnelles, mais à condition d'y infuser un esprit nouveau'.

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carries two main implications. One is that there can be no inherent moral reason why this rather than that ought to be thus commanded. The other is that the glorification of the righteousness of God is reduced to a pretentious tautology. If you accept the second alternative then you are insisting on standards of right and wrong which are, at least logically, independent of God's will. This option... opens the possibility of moral criteria which are in no way subjective. It gives back substance, though not by the same token truth, to the magnificent claim of the prophets of Israel that the Lord their God is a righteous God.

Discussing Flew's non-Christian views from a Christian standpoint in the *Downside Review* (1970, p. 10), Dom I. Trethowan writes: 'What a theist will say is that God is our own good and that his commands are statements of the way in which we may reach him. It is an extraordinary thing that so many modern philosophers think of the Christian God as an autocrat issuing arbitrary orders.' Flew's purpose in including Socrates's question in the *Introduction* was to show that in philosophy the impossibility of final answers does not rule out the possibility of progress, and this at least we may accept for our comfort.<sup>1</sup>

(iii) *Logical points.* 'Plato is not writing logic. His interest is metaphysical.' So Ross (*Analytics* 26) of an argument in the *Phaedo*. He never wrote logic for its own sake, but only by the way, to remove obstacles from the path of clear thinking about moral standards or the nature and extent of the realm of being. Martha Kneale describes the position thus:

Although it is clear that Plato discovered some valid principles of logic in the course of his argument, he is scarcely to be called a logician. For he enunciates his principles piecemeal as he needs them, and he makes no attempt to relate them to one another or to connect them in a system as Aristotle connected the various figures and moods of the syllogism. It is not unlikely that he would even have disapproved of logical investigations pursued for their own sake.

Yet in spite of his lack of system, and the fact that 'while his dialogues contain much logical material, none of them is purely logical in

<sup>1</sup> The latest essays on the contemporary relevance, religious and philosophical, of the problem are those of MacKinnon and Meynell in the Aristotelian Society's suppl. vol. 46 (1972).



content', 'he is undoubtedly the first great thinker in the field of the philosophy of logic'.<sup>1</sup>

This being so, the question whether Plato or Aristotle (as the latter claimed, *Soph. El.* 183b34-184b3) should be called the first logician is somewhat barren. Aristotle was the first systematizer of a logic which could be called formal. Plato's logical lessons are valuable, but we shall pick them up incidentally as we pursue the unity of virtue or the immortality of the soul, and in the form of illustrative examples rather than general principles.

(a) First comes the mistake of confusing exemplification with definition (6d), already mentioned as part of the elenchus. Hoerber (*Phron.* 1958, 100) denies that Euthyphro's first attempt (at 5d) is parallel in this respect to those offered at the same stage in other early dialogues like the *Meno* and *Hippias Major*. His answer to the question 'What is piety?' is not *only* 'What I am doing now', but 'prosecuting a murderer or temple-robber'; i.e., his intent is 'follow the law'. But Socrates's interpretation of it at 6d is not in fact unfair, because prosecution of offenders does not cover the whole range of pious duty.<sup>2</sup>

(b) At 10a-c Plato is trying to explain, apparently for the first time, and perhaps with indifferent success (p. 105 n. 2 above), the distinctions between the active and passive voice and between the indicative mood and the participle. This type of analysis, which we may call grammatical, is in fact logical, an analysis of thought-forms, and as such appears to be an advance on the often arbitrary classification of terms and the semantic distinctions which, so far as our evidence goes, represent the limit of the Sophists' achievements in grammar. (See vol. III, 219-21.)

<sup>1</sup> *D. of L.* 11f., 14, 17. The verdict of R. E. Allen (*P.'s Euth.* 52) is more negative than most, based on the lack of evidence 'that Plato had any notion of logical form, any notion that relations might obtain between propositions simply in virtue of their structure rather than in virtue of the meanings of their terms'.

<sup>2</sup> What, e.g., of ὁ ἀσεβῶν himself (5e)? What of the duties (mentioned later) of sacrifice and prayer? Taylor (*PMW* 149) simply says that according to E.'s first statement piety is 'to proceed against the party guilty of an offence against religion'. He rightly ignores S.'s further narrowing of it as irrelevant to the question of exemplification vs. definition, as also does Gomperz (*GT* II, 359): 'E. at first merely refers to the class of instances to which his own belongs.' Geach makes a different point, the Aristotelian one that 'a set of examples may in a given case be more useful than a formal definition' (*Monist*, 1966, 371). See vol. III, 254, on Arist. *Pol.* 1260a25.

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(c) At 11a Socrates complains that Euthyphro has not revealed to him the essence (*ousia*) of piety, but only an accident (*pathos*), something that it undergoes or that happens to or characterizes it,<sup>1</sup> namely that the gods like it. Commentators point out that the distinction is here made for the first time in extant literature.<sup>2</sup> As the fundamental distinction between the essence of something, to be expressed in its definition, and other qualities which belong to it either permanently or temporarily, but do not form part of its definition, this simple dichotomy is the first necessary step on the way to Aristotle's elaborate analysis, when in the *Topics* (101b17-25) he distinguishes definition, proprium, genus and accident. According to this more sophisticated scheme, the *pathos* 'loved by the gods' would be a proprium of piety, for an accident in the strict sense belongs to an individual, and may alter without affecting its essence, i.e. its character as a member of its species, like the colour of hair in a man. (See also on *Lysis* 217d, pp. 148f. below.)

(d) At 11eff. Socrates explains to Euthyphro (who cannot at first grasp it) that universal affirmative propositions are not convertible: all dogs are animals but not all animals are dogs.<sup>3</sup> This introduces the notion of genus and species, or in Plato's language 'whole' and 'part',<sup>4</sup> and brings them a step nearer to the correct method of seeking

<sup>1</sup> At this stage Plato has the literal connexion with *πάσχειν* very much in mind, but with Aristotle it became the equivalent of *συμβεβηκός* (ποιότης καθ' ἣν ἀλλοιοῦσθαι ἐνδέχεται, *Metaph.* 1022b15). Cf. its application to number and magnitude at *Metaph.* 985b29 and *Rhet.* 1355b31. For ἡ πάθος ἡ οὐσίαν at *H. Maj.* 301b contrast Friedlander, *Pl.* 11, 317 n. 6 (Hippias is muddled) with Soreth, *H. Maj.* 56 (their combination here is natural and right). In spite of Tarrant's criticism in *CR* 1955, 53, Soreth is surely right. Cf. also Malcolm, *AGPh* 1968, 189 n. 3 *ad fin.*

<sup>2</sup> So Burnet and Adam *ad loc.* Taylor (*PMW* 152 n. 2) says the terms must belong to an existing logical terminology because Plato uses them without explanation, but as Burnet pointed out, they are immediately explained by the following words, *ὅτι πέπονθε τοῦτο κτλ.*

<sup>3</sup> I still speak of the conversion of *A* propositions, though I appreciate Allen's point (*P.'s E.* 51f.) about the distinction between *logica utens* and *logica docens*. S. does not state the formal rule, but since he asks whether, because (οὖν 11e11) all the pious is just, all the just is pious, and explains his meaning by the further examples of fear and reverence, number and even number, we may surely grant that Plato was fully aware of the logical point. For contrast with Allen see Sprague, *PUF* 92f.

<sup>4</sup> Allen (*P.'s E.* 85-9, 102) brings out the point that for Plato, with his metaphor of part and whole, the genus is fuller and richer in content than its species; a notion which has become overlaid by the Aristotelian idea that 'genera are poorer in content than species, and that passage upward in the abstractive hierarchy is passage toward emptiness'. This point becomes extremely important later in relation to the hierarchy of the world of Forms.

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a definition: first agree on the larger class, or genus, to which the object belongs, then discover what special character (*differentia*) it has that marks it off from the rest of that genus as a separate species (12d5-7). Only a species, that is, a whole class of things, actions or qualities, is definable, the single 'form' that makes all individual  $\alpha$ s  $\alpha$ ; no definition can mark off one individual from another within an *infima species*. This ostensibly logical point introduces us to what became an immense philosophical problem for Plato and Aristotle and others, especially philosophers of science. Plato, assuming that only the definable could be known, and equating the object of knowledge with reality, concluded that forms, rather than concrete individuals, constituted the real world. Aristotle, with the mind of a natural scientist, started from the premise that only concrete, sensible individuals existed, and was then faced with the difficulty that the real world eluded scientific knowledge (so e.g. *Metaph.* 999a26-9), which, like Plato, he equated with the ability to 'give an account' or definition (λόγον διδόναι).

(iv) *Forms in the Euthyphro*. What Plato meant by a Form, and what status it had in his universe of being, what were the relations of Forms to their instantiations in the sensible world and to each other – these are questions which will take us to the very heart of his philosophy. Here we meet them for the first time. What may we conclude from their appearance in the *Euthyphro*?

The way in which the Platonic 'Theory of Ideas' grew out of the Socratic search for definitions has already been described<sup>1</sup> and we may put our question in the form: 'What stage had Plato reached when he wrote the *Euthyphro*?' The mentions of *eidos* and *idea* (used interchangeably by Plato; the latter gave birth to the misleading title 'theory of ideas') occur at 5d and 6d-e, as follows:

(5d) Is not the pious in every action the same [in Greek, 'the same as itself'], and likewise the impious, is it not the complete contrary of the pious yet always identical with itself and possessing one single form in

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III, 352f. For additional testimony from Xenophon and Aristotle that the quest for definitions was characteristic of S. himself, see pp. 424 and 433 (Xen.), 418 and 425 (Arist.).

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respect of its impiety? Does not this apply to everything that can be characterized as impious?

(6d-e) You remember then that I did not ask you to indicate to me one or two of the many pious actions, but the very form (*eidos*) itself by which all pious acts are pious. For you said, I think, that it is by one form (*idea*) that impious things are impious and pious pious. Don't you remember? Teach me then what this form is, so that, fixing my eyes on it and using it as a pattern, I may call pious any action of yours or anyone else's that is of the same sort and deny the title to anything that is not.

### NOTES ON 5d1-5

(1) At 5d4 I translate ἀνοσιότητα with Burnet in his 1924 ed. His arguments *ad loc.* are stronger than Adam's, and I see nothing in favour of μὴ δσιότητα (*OCT*).

(2) It worries some scholars that in τὸ ἀνόσιον Plato seems to recognize a 'negative Idea'. Ross has dealt with this in *PTI* 167f., but in any case we cannot assume at this stage that the *Euthyphro* is talking about 'Platonic Ideas' as they are usually understood from later dialogues.

(3) I take ὁμοιον in line 3 to be only a stylistic variant for ταῦτόν. For ὁμοιον = identical see vol. 1, 305 n. Aristotle (*GC* 323b11) can speak of τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ὁμο.ον, and cf. Diog. Apoll. fr. 5 (*DK* 11, p. 62 lines 3-5).

What do these passages enable us to say about forms?<sup>1</sup>

In some sense they exist. This is not argued but assumed. It would be unreasonable to suppose that Socrates repeatedly asked the question 'What *is* the form?' without believing that it was something real and not a figment of the imagination. Moreover, at 11a he says that to ask 'What is the pious?' is equivalent to asking for its being, or essence (*ousia*). That he should take this for granted is natural, because everyone does. Protagoras was no believer in absolutes, but when asked 'Are justice and piety things (πράγματα)?' 'Do you say that piety exists?' it was natural for him to reply in the affirmative (*Prot.* 330c-d). We all agree that there is such a thing as justice or piety, not least a man who complains 'There's no justice in the world!'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion see R. E. Allen's *P.'s E. and the Earlier Theory of Forms*, to which I am deeply indebted, even if I have not always seen things in the same light. I have noted some places where I have ventured to differ, so that the reader may choose Professor Allen's interpretation if he wishes.

<sup>2</sup> This does not only apply to the man in the street. G. E. Moore was no follower of S. or Plato, yet his language in *Princ. Eth.* (12f.) is remarkably Socratic: "'Pleased" means nothing

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In all probability Socrates went no further in delimiting the mode of existence of such entities,<sup>1</sup> save to insist that if they existed at all, they must have an independent, constant nature of their own, unaffected by our opinions of them. If I think justice consists in obeying the laws, and you think it is letting the strong man take all he can, this means, not that it is a purely subjective notion, but that we do not yet know what it is. It is important to remember what Aristotle rightly said, that Socrates's interest in these 'forms' was ethical, to reform conduct. He was no ontologist, and all his attention was concentrated on the *moral* forms – justice, piety, courage and the like. His innovation was to stop people in their tracks and ask them the meaning of a term they were using, and which everyone uses every day. They know, of course, and are only surprised that he should ask such a ridiculously simple question (*Meno* 71b–e, *H. Maj.* 286e).

Undoubtedly the form has this kind of existence in the *Euthyphro*, objective and unaffected by our conception of it. But has it also an existence independent of the instances (in this case actions) in which it is manifested? In the developed Platonism of the middle dialogues, the Ideas are spoken of in exalted poetic and religious language as divine (e.g. *Symp.* 211e, and see Cornford, *PTK* 190 n. 3), eternal and changeless, having their being in a world 'beyond the heavens', removed from space and time. There is certainly no trace of this two-world metaphysics in the *Euthyphro*, and at 5d Socrates says explicitly, 'Is not the pious *in* every action the same?'<sup>2</sup> Here one must be careful. The doctrine of Forms will unfold gradually as we read on, but it may be said now that in the 'two-world' dialogues the language of 'transcendence' never supersedes altogether the language

but having pleasure, and...so far as it is pleasure we have...what we have is one definite thing, some one thing that is the same in all the various degrees and in all the various kinds of it that there may be.' Among the words I have omitted are two that show where Moore and S. differ fundamentally: for Moore this 'one definite thing' is 'absolutely indefinable'.

<sup>1</sup> Although I do not go all the way with Allen (*o.c.* 105 ff.), I do not think his statement on p. 82 could be bettered: 'For Socratic dialectic, existence is, so to speak, a given: the aim is to penetrate its nature, and that penetration will be expressed in a definition.'

<sup>2</sup> I cannot dismiss the phrase ταῦτόν ἐστιν ἐν πάσῃ πράξει (5d1–2) so lightly as Allen does on p. 146. It may have been just 'an ordinary way of saying that an action is just', but I think S. or Plato had by now thought the matter out further, as Allen himself argues had happened with the common assumption that 'piety exists' (pp. 109f.).

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of 'immanence'. The actual preposition 'in' is uncommon, but Plato speaks freely of the Form being 'present to' its instances in the sensible world and 'entering into' them, and of the instances as 'sharing in', 'possessing' and 'receiving' the Form.<sup>1</sup> As his theory developed, it would have been difficult for the Forms both to retain their immutability and to serve as explanations of qualities manifest in the sensible world without this ambiguous status, and to maintain it became a truly formidable crux. It even led him at one point to speak of the Form itself and the 'form in us' in a way that has caused some scholars to suppose them two different things (pp. 353–6 below).

The question, therefore, is not whether Socrates here speaks of the form of piety as 'in' or 'possessed by' pious acts, but whether he *also* speaks of it as existing outside them. Of this there is no trace. No one reading the *Euthyphro* could suppose that when he asks 'What is the pious?' he has in mind anything but the characteristic common to all acts to which we give the name 'pious', whose presence in them explains and justifies our applying the same epithet to all. Forms, in fact, are universals. Now Aristotle says that Socrates first directed attention to universals by his demand for definition, but did not separate universals from the particulars. Plato on the other hand, and those who followed him, made the Forms both universals and at the same time separate individuals – which, he adds, accounts for the difficulties in which they landed themselves. Plato was impressed by the Heraclitean view that everything in the sensible world is ceaselessly changing, yet convinced that for knowledge to be possible there must be a stable object to be known. But (as Aristotle agreed, *Metaph.* 1086b5) it is universals that make knowledge possible, hence Plato concluded that what exists outside the flux of change and is the only object of knowledge is the universal – i.e. what had hitherto been considered only as such but now becomes something much more. Aristotle himself kept closer to Socrates (who, he says, was right not to give the universals separate existence, *Metaph.*, *ib.*) with

<sup>1</sup> See the examples listed in Ross, *PTI* 228–30. The list is not perfect (Cherniss in *AJP* 1957, 250) and the references should be checked with the texts. In particular, not all of the few occurrences of *ἐν* seem to be applied to Forms in Plato's technical sense. But it amply demonstrates the point above.

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his doctrine of the internal form, logically prior to, but in no other way separate from particulars.<sup>1</sup>

Plato also calls the form an example or paradigm (παράδειγμα 6e), meaning that once one knows what e.g. piety is and can give an account or definition of it, one will be able to recognize it in future and judge whether a certain action should be called pious by observing whether it is 'of that sort' (τοιούτου). Later, when the Forms had been translated to the place beyond the heavens (*Phaedr.* 247c) and transformed into ideals, the same ambiguous word<sup>2</sup> was used to represent them as perfect models of which their instances in this world are copies, all imperfect. Nothing in the *Euthyphro* suggests this doctrine.

He also describes the relationship by saying that the form of pious is that 'by which' (dative case) all pious acts are pious (6d).<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>1</sup> λόγῳ χωριστόν as opposed to the individual which is χωριστόν ἀπλῶς, *Metaph.* 1042a 26–31. For the rest of the above para. see *ib.* 1078b 30–2, 1086a 31–b 13, 987a 32–b 7. For translation and a different interpretation see Allen 130ff. His analysis is subtle, yet I still feel it is straining the simple words οὐ χωριστὰ ἐπιοῖ to say that Aristotle 'does not suggest that the Socratic Form is "immanent" in its instances' (p. 135). Nor does it seem necessary to say that a form cannot be immanent because it is logically prior (pp. 145, 154). So is the Aristotelian form, which Allen describes on p. 133 (quoting *Metaph.* 1037a 29) as τὸ εἶδος τὸ ἐνόν. On p. 134 he says that 'moral forms have no sensible instances'. This is true in the (Platonically) trivial sense that particular moral actions are not (*qua* moral) direct objects of sight or hearing, but they are all part of the realm of αἰσθητά, changeable like the rest of the natural world and contrasted like it with the changeless being of the Forms. I also find strange the suggestion of identity as a criterion for immanence (pp. 135–6). Could anyone say that *A* is immanent in *B* if it is *B*? In so far as this interpretation of Socrates is attributed to Aristotle, it seems to depend on how one takes the vague phrase περὶ ἐτέρων τοῦτο γιγνόμενον at 987b 5 (Allen 134). It simply means, I believe, that whereas S. thought that moral acts, and other phenomena of the sensible world, could be defined because they possessed common characteristics which remained the same in all and constituted their unchanging essence, Plato dismissed this as impossible.

<sup>2</sup> Παράδειγμα was used with the same ambiguity as English 'example', to mean (a) an instance or sample of a class ('the gallery contains many examples of Impressionist painting'; cf. βίῳ παραδείγματα, *Rep.* 617d) and (b) an ideal or standard ('to set an example'), and so an original to be copied (Plato, *Tim.* 28a and b). The two of course can shade into one another: one or two known examples of an artist's work can be used as a standard or criterion to test the genuineness of others less certainly attested. This is the use in the *Euthyphro*. Παράδειγμα had even a third sense, corresponding to our 'model', which is used both for (b) above (e.g. an artist's model) and contrariwise (c) for a copy or imitation (e.g. model soldiers: so in *Hdt.* 2.86.2, the Egyptian embalmers show their prospective customers παραδείγματα νεκρῶν ξύλινα, τῇ γραφῇ μεμιμημένα). Plato even uses it in this last sense, though rarely, as when at *Rep.* 529c–d he describes the motions of the visible stars as παραδείγματα of the 'true motions' which they imitate.

<sup>3</sup> It is natural to call this the instrumental dative, but we must beware of assuming that various uses of the same case were as clearly distinguished in Plato's mind as they have been

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means no more than what I have already said, that its presence in the instances gives the objective justification for calling them pious. To understand the sentence 'This action is pious' one must translate it into 'This action contains the form of the pious'.<sup>1</sup> The expression persists when the Forms become transcendent as well as 'present in' things, but is used especially in connexion with the latter relationship. So at *Phaedo* 100d: that 'by which' all beautiful things are beautiful (d7) is 'the beautiful', and what *makes* them beautiful (d5) is its 'presence, or association, or whatever the mode of its attachment may be'.

Finally, in naming the universal which is to be defined Plato in this dialogue almost always uses the common Greek idiom<sup>2</sup> of article with adjective ('the pious') rather than the abstract noun 'piety'. Between 13c and 14e he four times uses the noun (δσιότης), just enough to show that he is there regarding it as a synonym, and at 14c5 'the holy and holiness' is plainly a hendiadys. Then to the end of the dialogue, he reverts to the adjective, which is evidently his favourite, and I have therefore kept to its English equivalent. This carries certain consequences for the doctrine of Forms. To say that piety is itself pious, as praying and sacrifice are pious, sounds, to us at least, nonsensical. But to say that 'the pious' – that which by its very nature is pious and nothing else – is not pious, could sound equally nonsensical, and in the *Protagoras* Socrates and Protagoras agree in rejecting the notion (330d–e, p. 223 below). Clearly then, if the two are identified, there are rocks ahead, in the shape of what has come to be known as the problem of the self-predication of the Forms. It was not until much later that any such difficulty presented

later by grammarians. There is also the 'dative of accompaniment'. At *Prot.* 332b–c the dat. is followed by μετά with gen. and then ὑπό.

<sup>1</sup> Allen objects (p. 124) that 'no one who has failed to understand "This rose is beautiful" would find it illuminating to be told that the expression means "This rose partakes of Beauty"'. On the contrary, it gives just the help that an intelligent contemporary Athenian, bemused by the Sophists, would need. It was the old problem of the one and the many and the assumed univocal character of 'is'. As we all know, a rose is a rose is a rose. But one thing cannot be two. How then can what is a rose be at the same time beautiful? (See esp. *Soph.* 251a, *Ar. Phys.* 185b25; and cf. Cornford, *P. and P.* 72–4.) Not, say Socrates and Plato, because it is the same thing as the beautiful, but because it contains or possesses the beautiful (or beauty). Cf. also the explanation of Grube, *P.'s Th.* 19.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of this semi-abstract use see Bluck's *Phaedo* 176 and 202 (quoting Webster), and cf. vol. 1, 79 (Anaximander).



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itself to Plato, and a full discussion of it is appropriate to the *Parmenides*; but one curious effect of the adjectival form is worth noticing here.

We are accustomed to thinking of 'the pious' as for Plato equivalent to 'piety', and both simply as alternative expressions for the form (*eidos* or *idea*) which must be present in a particular action if it is to be rightly called pious.<sup>1</sup> But if we look again at 5 d we see that not only is the pious always the same, and the impious likewise always its opposite and the same as itself, but that the impious (and of course the pious too) 'has a single *idea* in respect of its impiety'.<sup>2</sup> That is to say, though it is the unchanging essence of all impious acts, it is not identical with the form and not identical with impiety. Similarly at 11 a Socrates can replace his question 'What is the pious?' by asking for the *ousia* (lit. 'being') of the pious. This is only natural, since *ousia* means simply 'what any thing is' (*Phaedo* 65 d, 92 d), but we usually think of a form as the *ousia* (essence or being)<sup>3</sup> of its particulars (since it is that 'by which', being present, the particulars are what they are) rather than having an *ousia* and accidents (*pathē*) of its own. Once again it appears that 'the pious', the attribute which is always the same in every pious act, is not strictly identical with the *idea* piety, since it has accidents as well as an essence (11 a). In terms of definition (which is what the dialogue is about), the form is definable *per se* and completely, the universal is definable as possessing the form always and everywhere yet can have things happen to it (the literal meaning of *pathē*), such as divine approval, which are outside its definition, and the particular is definable only in so far as, and for so long as, it possesses the universal or the form (not consistently

<sup>1</sup> For the three possible ways in which the expression can function, as referring to a particular under discussion, as a collective, and as an abstract noun, see Allen, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Actually 5 d 1-5 is a tricky sentence, though nobody seems to have thought it worthy of remark. The difficulty is that one naturally reads it as if the universal τὸ ἀνόσιον were the subject of all that follows, and then is suddenly faced with another subject at the end, namely πᾶν ὅτιπερ ἂν μέλλῃ ἀνόσιον εἶναι; and the question is, at what stage does this new subject, the particular, take over what precedes it? Perhaps Plato still felt that the predicates applied ἀπὸ κοινοῦ, but at any rate the second subject appears as a conversational afterthought, syntactically unrelated to the rest of the sentence, which can only be read as applying the predicates to τὸ ἀνόσιον. (Whether we read ἀνοσιότητα or one of its alternatives does not affect the point made above.)

<sup>3</sup> I confess I am puzzled by Allen's argument (pp. 120f.) that forms can be the essence of things but not their being. Like Socrates, I miss a definition. Or is it rather Prodicus we need?

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distinguished by Plato) which it may at any time lose, since all particulars are changeable.

These reflections put us in a delicate position. With other critics, I deprecate reading into Plato more than he says, assuming that because he says *A*, and *A* to a modern reader implies *B*, therefore he must have meant *B* although he did not say it. This applies especially to the argument of Burnet, Taylor and others that because the words *eidos* and *idea* are used in this dialogue of the universal characteristic, therefore a particular unitary doctrine called the 'Theory of Ideas', just as it appears in *Phaedo* and *Republic*, must lie behind it, being in fact a theory of Socrates himself. It may be thought equally rash to suggest that the language of the dialogue raises problems of which Plato himself was not yet aware, but which forced themselves on him as he advanced further from the simple intellectual ethic of Socrates, and account for distinctions expressly drawn, solutions offered, and bafflement experienced in his later work. Yet at least the positions are different, and in judging an early dialogue it would be unreasonable to exclude from our minds all knowledge of the others. This hindsight can alert us to the seeds of future discussions already latent in words and phrases that are actually there.

To sum up, a 'form' in the *Euthyphro* is the essential nature of a moral quality, expressed in its definition.<sup>1</sup> It exists independently of our conceptions of it, and is unchanging, but exists only in its instances. In them, it is that element whose presence makes them what they are – pious if it is the form of piety and so on.<sup>2</sup> Being constant, it is, when once known, recognizable in future instances and may be used as a touchstone to test whether they have the quality or not. Finally we noticed that Plato's habit of referring to a universal by means of an adjective with article rather than an abstract noun led him into language which at the time would seem only natural but portended future modifications in the status of forms and the relation between particulars and universals.

<sup>1</sup> So far, it is fairly close to existing usage in Thucydides, the Hippocratics and others. (See vol. III, 430, and Allen, *P.'s E.* 28f.) A difference is that whereas its normal use was with substantives – the form of a disease, of persuasion, forms of war, of death etc. – in the *Euthyphro* we have the form of a moral quality, expressed adjectivally as 'the pious'.

<sup>2</sup> The view taken here coincides with Soreth's, *H. Maj.* 28.

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(v) *Is there a positive conclusion?* That there is much to be learned from the *Euthyphro* is now obvious. What is still disputed is whether it offers any answer, directly or indirectly, to its own main question: 'What is piety?' Ostensibly, of course, the quest ends in failure. Grote wrote (*Pl.* 1, 322f.): 'In no part of the Platonic writings do we find any tenable definition of the Holy and the Unholy, such as is here demanded from Euthyphron. The talent of Sokrates consists in exposing bad definitions, not in providing good ones.' And the gap of a century is bridged by the latest commentator (Allen, p. 67 and cf. p. 6): 'The *Euthyphro* ends in failure: no definition of holiness is stated, and none is implied. There is no "mask" which can be stripped off the dialogue to reveal its true meaning: it bears its meaning on its face.' However, this has not been the universal view in the intervening years. Many have seen lurking behind Sokrates's words the Platonic 'Idea of the Good' as described in the *Republic*, or some equally positive concept.<sup>1</sup>

We must be on our guard, first, against imposing too mechanical a structure on this or any Platonic dialogue. The *Euthyphro* can be seen as possessing two sections separated by an 'interlude': the first (2a-11b) is purely elenctic and ends with the interlocutor confessing himself baffled; in the 'interlude' (11b-e) they discuss the situation, then in the final part (11e-16a) the argument is restarted by a suggestion of Sokrates, but again ends in failure. The *Meno* is the best example, on a larger scale, of the same construction, and we are invited to see it also in two very different dialogues, the *Protagoras* and the *Phaedo*. We are also asked to agree (without argument) that the first part is 'merely introductory' (Burnet p. 50) or 'prefatory' (Hoerber, *l.c.* 114) and that if there is any positive doctrine it is to be found in the second part (though the 'preface' is three times as long).

<sup>1</sup> Rabinowitz in *Phron.* 1958, 113 n. 4, gives ref. for 7 'positivists' and 6 'negativists'. He himself offers an elaborate positive interpretation. This suffers, I venture to think, (a) from introducing into a lightly ironical remark of S. (that because he pays great attention to E.'s wisdom, nothing that E. says will 'fall to the ground', i.e. be wasted) the meaning that everything E. says 'will be rendered valid', and (b) not only equating the θεοί of the dialogue with the νοῦς of *Tim.*, *Phil.* and *Laws* but giving them (or it) as their function (the πάγκαλον ἔργον of 13e) 'the apprehension of the Platonic ideas'. It is at least questionable whether the 'Platonic ideas' were already there to be apprehended, and πάγκαλον has a suspiciously ironical ring (Burnet *ad loc.*).

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Plato's art is not bound by rules like this, and in fact a positive conclusion of great importance is reached just before the interlude, when Socrates gets Euthyphro to see that if the gods love piety that is because of its intrinsic character: its character as piety cannot depend on the accident that the gods are fond of it. In spite of Socrates's logical smoke-screen (distinction between active and passive, essence and accident), Euthyphro could have replied that 'pious' was by definition equivalent to 'loved by the gods'. Orestes had a religious duty to kill his mother because Apollo ordered it, and there was no other criterion by which he could be judged. This is what he believed until he met Socrates, who with the air of innocently pointing out the inevitable logical consequences of his companion's own position, leads him to agree unwittingly to something quite different. This positive conclusion about piety as an unchanging essence prepares the way for Socrates's suggestion after the interlude that its essence is moral (p. 110 above).

From there onward the positive results are as follows. Piety is one of the two main species of morality (for so one may translate *dikaion* in this context), right conduct in our attentions to the gods, and right conduct towards our fellow-men. As we know, Socrates believed that goodness or virtue was a single whole, though operating in different fields through what are called the separate virtues, and here we have a pretty strong hint to that effect. Next, by way of the concept of piety as service, Socrates introduces his King Charles's head, the analogy with the crafts (*technai*). Service itself is a *technē*, and all *technai* depend on knowledge. So therefore does piety (14c). That piety should amount to 'a kind of knowledge' is Socrates's own view, and it is not untypical that he should slip it into a suggestion on his opponent's level (he has in fact got Euthyphro to use the word first, 14b3), as if to say: 'Even you must admit that piety is a form of knowledge, though you have a wrong idea of its object.' Similarly in the *Protagoras* (352b-d) he elicits from Protagoras the assertion that knowledge and wisdom are the most powerful agents in human affairs, though as he knows, their ideas of the content of this knowledge are wholly different. Socrates, under the guise of the eternal searcher and questioner, concealed some quite positive

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convictions. After all, even to frame certain questions presupposes antecedent beliefs. To ask for a definition of a moral quality, one must believe that a moral quality has a single, constant, definable character, and whoever does so sets himself apart at once from the moral subjectivism of the Sophists.

It was this positive aspect of Socratic doctrine that appealed to Plato – the unity of virtue, its reduction to knowledge, the reality of the form – but having fallen under the spell of Socrates he did not set it down boldly in his own terms but was equally concerned to preserve the personal traits and methods of the man, his puzzled air, his mock humility before the self-satisfied, his readiness, when asked to ‘teach’, to reply in terms of ‘taking counsel together’ and ‘investigating together’ (*Laches* 189b–c, *Charm.* 158d, 165b). If this ‘masks’ the conclusions, then they are masked, but they are there nonetheless. This is a truly Socratic dialogue in that the subject is made to arise naturally out of the circumstances of his approaching trial, and he himself is portrayed at the top of his ironic form. But it is a work of art composed by Plato, who brings out the positive content of Socrates’s message and is even beginning to add to it in ways scarcely noticed by himself<sup>1</sup> but destined to acquire importance later on.

### (4) THE LACHES<sup>2</sup>

*Date.* As with the *Euthyphro*, we must be content to say that it is in the early group. All criteria by which scholars have tried to place it more accurately are highly subjective. Leisegang for instance thought that several features referred back to the *Protagoras*. The first is that both complain about sons who learn nothing from their fathers! Wilamowitz, like von Arnim in *Jugenddialoge*, also put it after the *Protagoras*, yet before the *Lysis*, *Charmides* and *Euthyphro*. Of more recent critics Dieterle (1966) called the *Laches* ‘perhaps the earliest of Plato’s works’, and Gauss thought it clearly the first of the group of ‘definition-dialogues’ on account of its ‘more primitive and awkward

<sup>1</sup> Inevitably. Cf. the quotation from Field on p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> For a bibliography of 20th-century literature on the dialogue, see Hoerber, *CP* 1968, 95 n. 1, and Schoplick, 86–90.

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form'.<sup>1</sup> Other reasons offered have been no more compelling. If I were to adopt the same subjective criteria, I should say that it is a little gem of construction (not at all 'ungelenkig'), but that its philosophical simplicity suggests an earlier work than the *Euthyphro*, which only appears earlier here for its dramatic continuity with the 'trial' dialogues.

*Dramatic date and characters.* Socrates is praised by Laches for his courage in the retreat from Delium in 424 B.C., and Laches himself was killed at the battle of Mantinea in 418 (Thuc. 5.74.3 in conjunction with 5.61.1). The conversation must therefore be supposed to take place between these two dates, more than 11 years before Plato was born, when Socrates was between 45 and 50.<sup>2</sup> All the participants are historical figures, Lysimachus and Melesias the less distinguished sons of famous fathers,<sup>3</sup> namely Aristides 'the just' and Thucydides the opponent of Pericles (not the historian). Lysimachus is said by Demosthenes (*contra Lept.* 115) to have received a reward of land in Euboea and money for unspecified services to the state, and Melesias is mentioned by Thucydides (8.86.9) as one of three representatives sent by the Four Hundred on an ill-fated mission to Sparta. Their sons, who are present as almost silent listeners but for whose sake the whole discussion is initiated, are mentioned in the *Theages* as chafing somewhat under Socrates's tutelage (see vol. III, 400), and young Aristides recurs in the *Theaetetus* (151a) as one who had left him too early and suffered a 'miscarriage' of his thoughts in consequence.

Nicias is too famous to need much description. Statesman and general, he is best known for the irony whereby he, who had spoken and voted against the folly of the Sicilian expedition, found himself chosen to command it, and for the tragic failure of the expedition under his leadership. There is (*pace* Wilamowitz, I, 184 n. 1) an allusion to this at 198d-199a, where Socrates says that a general should not allow himself to be influenced by soothsayers, which is

<sup>1</sup> Leisegang, *RE* 2400; Dieterle, *P.'s L. und C.* 32; Wilamowitz, *Pl.* I, 183 and 185; v. Arnim, *Jugend.* pt. 1, ch. 1; Gauss, *Handk.* 1.2.9. For a full list of views on the relative date, see Hoerber, *l.c.* 96f.

<sup>2</sup> For attempts to date it more closely, see Hoerber, *l.c.* 95f.

<sup>3</sup> The mediocrity of Melesias is mentioned at *Meno* 94c-d.

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what Nicias did to his cost. Here he appears also as a thoughtful and cultured man capable of an intelligent appreciation of Socrates, on whose recommendation he engaged Damon as a teacher of 'music' for his son Niceratus. Xenophon (*Symp.* 3.5) says he made this son learn all Homer by heart, and Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1413a9) tells of his defeat in a rhapsodic contest.<sup>1</sup>

Laches is strongly contrasted with Nicias in the dialogue, as the man to whom actions speak louder than words.<sup>2</sup> He receives a dozen mentions in Thucydides, mainly in connexion with his command of a small force sent to Sicily in 427, in which, however, he was later replaced by Pythodorus (3.115.2 and 6). He was also instrumental, with Nicias, in negotiating peace with Sparta, thereby offending Alcibiades, who thought he had been slighted (5.43.2). His death in action at Mantinea has already been mentioned.

As for Socrates himself, Plato shows him on familiar terms with the leading men, and the leading families, of Athens. Nicias knows him well, and Lysimachus, who is represented as an old man, is glad to meet him because Sophroniscus (whether or not he was a stonemason, vol. III, 378) was an old and valued friend. His poverty, which he mentions without embarrassment (186c), is no bar to the society of such men. Plato is also at pains to emphasize that he was a man of outstanding courage in action, not simply the endless talker whom the comic poets loved to depict. This he does by putting a eulogy of his behaviour in battle into the mouth of the blunt soldier Laches, who will only listen to anyone discoursing on goodness (*aretē*) if he has shown himself a 'true man' whose actions harmonize with his words.

### *The dialogue*

#### *(Direct dramatic form)*

Lysimachus and Melesias have invited the two generals, Nicias and Laches, to witness a display by an expert in heavy-armed fighting (hoplomachy), with the object of getting their opinion on the

<sup>1</sup> For the identity of this Niceratus see Cope *ad loc.* (vol. III, 139). Later he fell a victim to the Thirty Tyrants (Xen. *Hell.* 2.3.39, Lysias 18.6, Diod. 14.5.5).

<sup>2</sup> Their contrasting characters are well brought out by O'Brien, *Socr. Parad.* 114-17, or more fully in Anton and Kustas, *Essays* 303-15.

## *The Laches*

advisability of such training for their own sons. Nicias and Laches commend their intention, but Laches thinks they ought rather to consult Socrates, who is also present. (The scene is not mentioned, but is probably a public gymnasium.) Lysimachus did not know that S. was interested in education, but Nicias confirms it, adding that he is in S.'s debt for getting Damon, 'a man in every way suited to be a companion for the young', as music-teacher for his own son. Lysimachus is delighted to hear this, and Laches confirms the recommendation by a glowing account of S.'s conduct on the battlefield.

S. replies modestly that it is for his elders to speak first, and he will add anything that he can. Nicias and Laches, however, disagree on the merits of this form of training and the practical competence of its instructors, and this makes it all the more important to get S.'s opinion. He would have the casting vote, but he replies characteristically that it is not numbers but knowledge which should decide the issue. And he immediately lifts the discussion out of its narrow context by insisting that before deciding who is the expert they must decide what is the art about which they wish to consult him. He must understand the end in view, and hoplomachy is only a means. The end is the building of our sons' characters (*psychai*). S. can claim no qualifications in this art, and Nicias and Laches should be closely questioned to find out whether they have either been trained in it or can point to success achieved without training. Lysimachus thinks this an excellent idea, which prompts Nicias to remark that it is obvious that he does not know S.; if he had he would know that whoever talks to him, on whatever subject, soon finds himself called to account for his whole life. 'Well', he continues, 'I'm ready. I know what's coming to me, in fact I knew all along that with S. here it would not be our sons but ourselves that we should be talking about. But it's no bad thing, in fact I enjoy it. What about Laches?' Laches knows nothing of S.'s words, but he has seen him prove himself by deeds, and from such a man he is ready to submit to examination and to learn. S. may go ahead and confute him as much as he likes.<sup>1</sup>

Thus given the lead, S. suggests a new approach, 'closer to first

<sup>1</sup> Croiset (Budé 89) describes this speech of L. as 'd'une éloquence et d'une poésie qui ravissent'.



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principles'. If we know concerning anything that by its presence it will make something better (e.g. sight to eyes), and moreover are able to effect its presence, it follows that we know what it is. Now our friends are asking us how their sons' *psychai* can be improved by instilling virtue (*aretē*) into them. If we can do this, we must claim to know what it is ('So we do', says Laches), and if we know, we can *say* what it is. Let us be more modest and select only the part of *aretē* relevant to armed fighting, i.e. courage. What is it?

So once again, in the words of Xenophon, S. has 'led the whole discussion back to the definition'. (Xen., *Mem.* 4.6.13, see vol. III, 433.) And once again the question seems an easy one: anyone (says Laches) who will stand his ground and fight the enemy without flinching is brave. S. is apologetic: evidently he did not make his meaning clear. Even in military matters there are text-book cases where brave men will fight better by withdrawing, and moreover courage may be shown in many other spheres – at sea, against disease or poverty, and even in withstanding desires and pleasures. Can Laches tell him 'What is the courage that is the same in all these?' Laches thinks that, if he is to describe 'the all-pervading nature' of it, he would call it 'a kind of perseverance of the soul'. But they agree that courage is something fine and good, and there can be foolish perseverance which is harmful, so we must add 'wise' (or 'sensible', *φρόνιμος*). But not, surely, wise perseverance in everything, e.g. in spending money which you know you can replace? Again, a man who endures battle when numbers are on his side and the situation favourable is wiser than he who endures against odds. But is he braver? The guileless Laches thinks not. He also thinks that men who perform dangerous acts without the necessary technical skill are braver than those who have the skill, but less wise.<sup>1</sup> He is, then,

<sup>1</sup> In the *Protagoras* (350b) S. and Protagoras agree on the opposite of this: men who plunge into danger ignorant and untrained are not courageous at all, but mad. This occurs in a tiresome episode in which S. commits fallacies, P. objects to them but is himself confused, and instead of resolving the difficulties S. drops the subject abruptly and tries another line (pp. 219, 228 below). Here the contrary thesis leads directly to self-contradiction and *aporia*. Hence there is not much profit in creating, as some scholars have done, a problem over alleged discrepancy between the two dialogues, still less in building on it, with von Arnim (*Jugendd.* 5), a theory of their relative dates. Neither thesis represents S.'s real conviction, to which technical training in fighting, swimming etc. is irrelevant. Later in the *Prot.* (360d) he defines real courage (i.e. courage as a virtue) as 'knowledge of what is or is not fearful', exactly as he will define it in

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contradicting his previous admission that courage, being good, must lead to good results, and must therefore be more than rashness untempered by knowledge and good sense. At this point he gives up and confesses failure, being, as he says, unused to such discussions.

S. therefore turns to Nicias for help, which he gives by reminding them of what he has often heard from S. himself, that everyone is good at that in which he is wise.<sup>1</sup> If then the brave man is good, courage is a sort of wisdom. But what sort? Not presumably technical, as of a good musician. No, replies Nicias. Courage is the wisdom of knowing what is or is not to be feared.<sup>2</sup> Laches (obviously jealous of N.'s air of superiority and familiarity with S.'s thoughts) thinks this nonsense. It is the professional craftsmen who understand what is to be feared in any given case, as a doctor knows whether a symptom in disease is dangerous or not, but this does not make them brave. No, replies N. A doctor knows only what is healthy or unhealthy, not which of them is most to be feared. There are men for whom death is less fearful than continuance in life.<sup>3</sup> Then, says Laches ironically, your brave men are the soothsayers; only they know whether life or death will be better. N. denies this. They can foretell death, disease, loss, victory or defeat, but which of these will be best for the man whom they befall they can no more say than anyone else.

Laches says sarcastically that by a brave man N. must mean a god, and hands the argument over to S., who at first confirms his unfavourable opinion by suggesting that if courage is knowledge no animal can have it, so in this respect the lion and the deer are on a

*Laches* (199a), where however it is quickly widened to knowledge of good and evil in general (199c). It is also repeated as S.'s own in *Rep.* (430b). How close this comes to the truly Socratic view is hardly matter for a footnote; it involves the *Meno*, and possibly the *Phaedo*, as well as *Laches* and *Prot.* But at least S. would agree on this. A weak swimmer who deliberately enters dangerous currents out of bravado is merely foolhardy. If he has a family to support, his action may be harmful and wicked. If however he does it to save the life of another, knowing the risks but rightly concluding that his purpose outweighs them, he may be said to possess the virtue of courage.

<sup>1</sup> Or 'well-versed', or 'in what he understands'. For the meaning of *sophos* see vol. III, 27f.

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to compare this definition with the courage ascribed to the Athenians in the funeral speech of Pericles (*Thuc.* 2.40.3): 'We possess to an unusual degree the ability to act boldly and at the same time to think out our enterprises; and those are rightly judged to have the best spirit (*psyche*; cf. Burnet, *Ess. and Add.* 141) who recognize most clearly what is fearful and what enjoyable and are not thereby deterred from taking risks.'

<sup>3</sup> N. shows himself an apt pupil of S., for he is making the same point that S. himself makes at *Gorg.* 511e-512a.

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level. N. agrees, and adds that this applies even to children,<sup>1</sup> for courage is not any ignorant fearlessness. Thoughtful courage is rare, whereas heedless rashness is common among men, women, children or animals. To Laches this is Sophists' talk, but to S. it is worth examining, and he makes three points. (1) Courage, they have already agreed, is a part of virtue (*aretē*), which has other parts, e.g. temperance and justice. (2) Fear is the expectation of future evil.<sup>2</sup> (3) Knowledge in any field can deal with its subject in its past, present and future aspects equally, be it medicine, agriculture, military science or anything else. It follows that if courage is the knowledge of the objects of fear or the reverse, i.e. of future evil or good, it must be knowledge of good and evil in general. But if a man had that, he would surely possess all *aretē* – temperance, justice, piety and the rest – whereas we agreed that courage was only a part. So we have still not discovered what courage itself is.

### Comment

The jealous rivalry of the two generals for Socrates's approval, and their constant needling of each other, the one flaunting his superior culture and familiarity with Socrates, the other 'not used to this sort of thing' but anxious to continue the discussion simply because he is an example of the dogged persistence which is his own definition of courage and 'feels his fighting spirit aroused' (194a), is one of the best things in Plato's writings and must be savoured in the full text.

One may as well use this work as any to dispose of the search, which seems to obsess the scholarly world, for a single aim in each and every dialogue, a 'chief object', 'objet véritable', 'fundamental purpose', 'real subject', 'Hauptzweck', 'totius dialogi consilium' and so forth. As Grube said, to speak of these 'usually means to magnify one aspect of [the dialogues] at the expense of other aspects as important'.<sup>3</sup> The futility of such an exercise is brought home when

<sup>1</sup> It should be remembered that the Greek word for courage, ἀνδρεία, means literally 'manliness', though L.'s objections show that in general usage it had lost much of its etymological significance.

<sup>2</sup> S. repeats this definition of fear at *Prot.* 358d.

<sup>3</sup> *CQ* 1933, 203. Yet after disclaiming any such intention, G. goes on to assert that nevertheless 'it is quite clear that the *Prot.* is an attack upon the sophists as represented by Protagoras'. Even this can be legitimately doubted by some who study Plato's portrayal of Protagoras himself.

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we read, of a short and apparently simple work like the *Laches*, first in Shorey (*Unity* 15 n. 77) that its chief object is not the reduction of all virtues to knowledge, as Zeller thought, nor to bring out the unity of virtue (Horn), nor even the establishment of the definition 'wise perseverance' (which Bonitz favoured as the only suggestion not disproved), but only to exemplify in the contrast between Nicias and Laches 'the logomachy described in *Polit.* 306, 307'; next in Wilamowitz (I, 186) that the definition of courage is of minor importance and Plato's purpose is the defence and rehabilitation of Socrates; or in Friedländer (II, 49) that its subject is not so much courage as education. Croiset (Budé 88) goes so far as to say that the definition of courage is 'only a pretext', but sees the dialogue as 'a simple exposition of method', sufficient to itself. There are also more *recherché* surmises, such as Horneffer's (in Croiset *l.c.*) that Plato's purpose was to refute Socrates himself and separate his own doctrine from his master's, or Hinske's (in *Kant-Stud.* 1968) that the 'sujet central' is reflection on the means of remedying the profound crisis which Athens was undergoing.<sup>1</sup> In discussing future dialogues we may spare ourselves references to such single-minded interpreters.

What then is to be found in the dialogue, apart from its considerable value as entertaining literature? We see a model of Socratic dialectic proceeding on the same lines as in the *Euthyphro*: request for a definition, single instance offered instead, correction of this to a general concept, the suggested concept found faulty in its turn, discomfiture of the interlocutor relieved by a positive suggestion from Nicias—Socrates, this in turn found unsatisfactory, and a final confession of failure coupled with exhortation to future study. Socrates maintains his profession of ignorance throughout. Nicias and Laches are the experts in education. They must know, or they could not talk so confidently on the subject (186c–d, exactly the tactics used on Euthyphro at *Euth.* 15d). When invited by Laches to 'teach' them, he expresses his pleasure that they are ready 'to take counsel and look into the matter together' (189c). In trying to get a satisfactory definition from Laches, it has been noticed<sup>2</sup> that Socrates here uses

<sup>1</sup> References to, and criticism of, a number of such interpretations will be found in O'Brien, *Socr. Parad.* 117–18 (117 n. 8). <sup>2</sup> See v. Goldschmidt in Dieterle, *P.'s L. and C.* 61.

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all three of the arguments which may be necessary. (1) Other types of behaviour also fall within the definition (the argument *et alia*). (2) The opposite of the proposed definition (in this case withdrawal instead of standing to face an enemy) may also fall within it (*et oppositum*). (3) The proposed definition (here 'endurance') may itself under certain conditions appear contrary to the conception sought (*et idem non*).

Nor are the more positive aspects of Socratic doctrine wanting. Although the search for a definition of courage ostensibly ends in failure, the positive conclusions are so evident, in the light of our general acquaintance with Socrates, that they can scarcely be called masked. First we are told (190b) that before we can hope to instil virtue in others, we must know what it is. That question, however, is deliberately shelved in favour of concentrating on the particular virtue (part or species of the whole) relevant to their present purpose, namely courage. We know therefore that what is in Socrates's eyes the prior question is not, at least expressly, to be answered. (Cf. *Meno* 71a, *Prot.* 360e-361a.) We know his real belief, that virtue is a unity, not a collection of separate parts as the others think, but he starts from their presuppositions.<sup>1</sup> Nicias however is allowed to tell the company what he has learned from Socrates, that every man is *good* (ἀγαθός) at what he knows, and bad where he is ignorant, therefore courage is a kind of knowledge, and by implication so is all goodness (194c-d). So long as courage is kept separate from the rest of virtue, it is definable as knowledge of what is and what is not fearful, but Socrates argues that the man who knows this will be bound to know all good and evil and how they are produced, and such a man 'will be wanting in no virtue, temperance or justice or piety' (199c-d). In looking for the part, they have found the whole. So long, then, as courage is regarded as a particular species of virtue, they have failed to discover its specific differentia; but the truth (for Socrates) is that all the so-called virtues are ultimately reducible to one thing only, the knowledge of good and evil, a thesis which he upholds in detail in

<sup>1</sup> A point made by Dieterle, *o.c.* 51. For S.'s belief that virtue is one thing, namely knowledge, see vol. III, 450ff.; and though Plato added to and enriched it, he never abandoned it. Cf. *Laws* 965c-d.

## *The Laches*

the *Protagoras*, by taking pairs of virtues successively and trying to prove their identity. Having observed this, we may allow ourselves to notice a few hints earlier in the dialogue which point in the same direction. At 192d Socrates gets Laches to agree that the results of courage must always be beneficial, never harmful. In the *Meno* (87d–88d) a similar statement about virtue as a whole leads directly to the conclusion that it is knowledge. At 191d, by including in courage the ability to withstand pleasures and pains, he tacitly equates it with another of the recognized virtues, temperance or self-control (*sophrosynē*; cf. e.g. *Symp.* 196c, *Phaedr.* 237d–e, *Rep.* 430e).

The conclusion, then, is an affirmation of Socratic intellectualism in ethics:

Then do you think that such a man would in any respect fall short of virtue, if he *knew* all that is good, and understood perfectly how it is, has been, and will be produced, and evil also? Would such a man lack temperance or justice and piety, he to whom alone it pertains to be on his guard about what is or is not to be feared in the affairs of both gods and men, and to procure what is good, *because he knows* how to deal with them rightly? (199d)

On this fundamental point at least we are still at the Socratic stage. Knowledge is all-sufficient, and there is no hint of Plato's later recognition of the part played by the emotions in right or wrong conduct, with the consequent assumption of two or more aspects or 'parts' of the soul.<sup>1</sup> Other Socratic touches are the references at 185e to education as 'tendance of the soul' (as in the *Apology*) and the fact that this and the following sentences amount to an injunction to 'know oneself' and a challenge to account for one's life, as Nicias is quick to point out at 187e.

As for any doctrine of substantial forms, the *Laches* seems if anything less advanced than the *Euthyphro*. The words *eidōs*, *idea*

<sup>1</sup> Shorey and Hoerber (see the latter in *CP* 1968, 101) interpret the *Laches* in the light of the distinction in the *Rep.* between τὸ λογιστικόν and τὸ θυμοειδές. Laches in their view represents the temperamental aspect of bravery, Nicias its cognitive element. The two are indeed brilliantly contrasted in this respect, but for Plato the truth lies with Socrates, and with Nicias so far as he quotes S. That S. in his actions exemplified courage as understood by Laches only goes to prove that for the true philosopher (and such S. was for Plato, for all his own professions of ignorance) his knowledge is sufficient guarantee of right conduct.

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and *ousia* (being or essence) are absent, nor is the sought-for common element called a paradigm. Phrases for it are 'what courage is' (190d etc.), 'being *what* is courage the same in all these examples?' (191e), 'what by its nature runs through them all' (192c), 'what Nicias has in his mind's eye when he uses this name "courage"' (197e).<sup>1</sup> We also find a new noun for it when at 192b Socrates asks 'what *power* (or faculty, *δύναμις*) it is which is the same in pleasure and pain and all the things we mentioned just now, and is called courage'; and a reference to its *nature* at 192c in the mouth of Laches: 'if I must speak of that whose nature runs through them all' (τὸ διὰ πάντων πεφυκός). Such expressions must be remembered, in case they acquire added significance as the notion of forms existing prior to their instances takes shape in Plato's mind. The only other passage that might be relevant is 194a, where Socrates warns that if they give up, 'courage itself will laugh at us'. This passing personification of the subject, or more often of the argument itself (as at *Prot.* 361a, cf. *Charm.* 175c-d), was a favourite conversational touch of Socrates, with no philosophical import, though the phrase 'courage itself' will gain significance in other dialogues.<sup>2</sup> Here it must be read in context.

Plato will have more to say about courage and its relation to the whole of virtue, notably in the *Protagoras* and the *Republic* (especially 430b). At the end of his life, in the *Laws*, he retains substantially the same view of this relationship, though varying the nomenclature. (See *Laws* 963c-e, and Hoerber, *l.c.* 102.) We must keep an eye on it.

### (5) THE LYSIS

*Date.*<sup>3</sup> There is the usual diversity of opinion about a dialogue of this sort. Leisegang (*RE* 2409f.) notes that language-statistics put it at the end of the first or beginning of the second group, that Dittenberger even put it after the *Symposium* (which is highly unlikely),

<sup>1</sup> Here the Greek comes nearest to suggesting a standard. Cf. *οἱ ποτὲ βλέπων* with *Euthyphro* 6e *ἵνα εἰς ἐκείνην ἀποβλέπων καὶ χρώμενος αὐτῇ παραδείγματι*; also *Crat.* 389a *et al.*

<sup>2</sup> It occurs only here in the *Laches*, and never in the *Euthyphro* with reference to piety.

<sup>3</sup> For earlier claims of spuriousness, now discredited, see Levin in Anton and Kustas, *Essays* 248 n. 2.

## *The Lysis*

von Arnim and Wilamowitz close to *Charmides* (which seems very probable; von Arnim, *Jugendd.* 138 and *Rh. Mus.* 1916, 386, thought *Lysis* the earlier), and that it is most often thought to belong to the early, Socratic period. Stenzel (*PMD* 10) thought it might be later than the *Phaedo*, for Grube (*P.'s Th.* 216 n. 2) it was 'probably later than most of the early dialogues', for Schoplick (*Lys.* 77) transitional between the early and middle periods. Tentatively we may look on it as a 'late early dialogue', and even more tentatively suggest that Plato wrote it almost at the same time as the *Charmides* and probably before it.<sup>1</sup>

There is nothing to indicate the dramatic date, nor is it important. At the end (223b), Socrates describes himself as an 'old man', but since he is talking, not very seriously, to two schoolboys of twelve or thirteen, one cannot attach much weight to this.

*Scene and characters.* The setting of the dialogue is universally praised for its charm and liveliness. It shows to what trouble Plato can go in setting a scene and revealing character, and also his skill in allowing philosophical debate to arise naturally out of a real-life situation. If the subject is to be friendship, or more generally the attraction of one person for another in all its varieties, it must exemplify itself in the speakers.<sup>2</sup> So the characters, besides Socrates, are four, two schoolboys who are fast friends, and two older youths who are their admirers. The youth Hippothales and his favourite Lysis do not appear again in Plato, nor are they known in history, though Lysis's family is represented as famous for its wealth and victories in the games.<sup>3</sup> The other pair, Ctesippus and Menexenus, are uncle and nephew (206d). They were intimates of Socrates and present at his death (*Phaedo* 59b). Ctesippus, who seems to have been of an amorous disposition, reappears in the *Euthydemus* as the champion of a different favourite

<sup>1</sup> A. W. Begemann in his dissertation on the *Lysis* sees the dialogue as an exercise in relational logic, and on that account regards it as contemporary with the *Parmenides*. See review by de Vries in *Mnemos.* 1966. (The dissertation is in Dutch with a short English summary.) B. is also summarized and criticized by Schoplick, *Lysis* 12-17.

<sup>2</sup> The relationship between character-drawing and philosophy in the *L.* is the subject of a note by Hoerber in *CJ* 41 (1945-6).

<sup>3</sup> It appears however that his daughter's tomb has been found. She was appropriately named Isthmonike. (Wilamowitz, *Pl.* II, 69 n. 2, referring to *Ath. Mitt.* xxxvii, 227.)



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Clinias, and Menexenus (if, as seems probable, it is the same man) has a dialogue called after him.

The local detail is meticulously described. Socrates, that inveterate haunter of gymnasia, is on his way from the Academy to the Lyceum, taking the road which leads close to the city wall and outside it. At the gate by the spring of Panops he meets a group of young men including Hippothales and Ctesippus, who invite him to turn aside with them to a newly-built palaestra, where they foregather for discussions under a Sophist named Mikkos (otherwise unknown), whom Socrates knows and respects. He asks who else will be there, and there follows some banter about Hippothales's love for Lysis, and the songs and poems in praise of him and his ancestors with which, according to Ctesippus, he wearies the ears of his friends. Socrates doubts the wisdom of overpraising a favourite and so making him proud and hard to win. If he can meet Lysis, he will try to show how such a one ought to be spoken to.<sup>1</sup> Nothing easier. Menexenus and Lysis are close friends and both will be in the palaestra. Moreover it is a festival-day on which the children and older youths commingle. They enter, and find the ceremonies over and some of the boys in their holiday dress playing knucklebones in the dressing-room. Sitting down at the other end, they are joined by Menexenus and, when he had overcome his shyness, Lysis. Hippothales stations himself where Lysis cannot see him.

Before proceeding to the main discussion, it has to be explained that its difficulties are greatly increased for an English reader by the ambiguities of the word *philos*, *philia* and their cognates, which form its subject.<sup>2</sup> As a noun *philos* means 'friend', as an adjective it is most commonly passive, 'liked', 'loved' or 'dear'. But in composition 'phil-' has the active sense which we still preserve in 'philanthropist', 'philosopher', 'philhellene' etc. It is used very widely, e.g. *philippos* (fond of horses), *philomathes* (fond of learning, studious), *philotimos* (fond of honour, ambitious), *philoponos* (fond of work, diligent). The

<sup>1</sup> S.'s claim that, though no good at anything else, he is an expert on love, is made at 204b-c. (Cf. *Symp.* 193e.) For this claim and its significance see vol. III, 390-8.

<sup>2</sup> See also Taylor, *PMW* 65 n. 2.

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verb *philein*, to like, love or feel affection for, ranges from parental love to the love of a glutton for dinner. By itself it rarely connotes sexual love, for which the word is *eros* (n.), *erān* (vb.). A few quotations will bring out the fact that the two are distinct, though *eros* ought to, and commonly does, imply *philia*, but not vice versa. At *Laws* 837a Plato says that when *philia* is violent, intense or passionate (σφοδρόν; so also Aristotle at *EN* 1158a12 calls *eros* 'an excess') 'we call it *eros*';<sup>1</sup> and at *Phaedr.* 231c 'they say that those who are in love feel especial friendship towards, or affection for (*philein*), the objects of their passion'. At 256c lovers who have indulged their bodily desires will remain friends, but less so than those who refrain. In Euripides (*Tro.* 1051) Hecuba, fearful of Helen's lasting power over Menelaos, says, 'He is no lover whose affection is not for ever', and finally Aristotle (*An. Pr.* 70a6) gives, simply as an example of probability, the probability that those loved will feel affection for (*philein*) their lovers.<sup>2</sup> Some light will also be thrown on the relationship by the *Lysis* itself.

A further point is that *philia* is not confined to human relationships. Aristotle (*EN* 1155a16) speaks of *philia* between parents and offspring among birds and animals as well as men. In Theophrastus's botanical works there is *philia* between plants. In Empedocles it was at the same time a cosmic force causing the physical elements to combine, love or liking among human beings, and an influence for good. (See vol. II, 152ff., 248f., vol. III, 149 n. 2.) In Plato's own *Timaeus* (32c2) the cosmos enjoys *philia* between its constituent elements because they are linked by geometrical proportion, and in the *Gorgias* (508a) heaven and earth as well as gods and men are united by *philia*, orderliness and other virtues. These uses must not be thought of as simply metaphorical. Psychical (human) and physical *philia* are clearly distinguished by Aristotle in the *Ethics* (1155b1ff.).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> But not always. *Lysis*'s father σφοδρά φιλεῖ him (207d).

<sup>2</sup> If, as the O.Tr. assumes, τοὺς φθονοῦντας and τοὺς ἐρωμένους are the subjects of their verbs. But both grammatically and as good sense the words may equally well mean that it is natural to hate the envious and to feel affection for those who arouse one's passions. The last part would then be parallel in meaning to *Phaedr.* 231c, and *Lys.* 212b-c. For the relationship between φίλα and ἐρως see also Arist. *EN* 1157a6-16.

<sup>3</sup> To write the above I have not read all the scholarly literature about φίλα. For further investigations the following should be a useful start: F. Dirlmeier, *Philos und philia im vorhellenistischen Griechentum* (diss. Munich 1931).

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### *The dialogue (from 207b)*

#### *(Reported form, narrated by Socrates)*

As soon as S. has hinted at the coming subject by a few teasing questions to Lysis and Menexenus on their friendship, M. is called away, and S. continues with L. His parents love him and wish his happiness, yet they restrict his actions at every turn, and even put him under the authority of a slave (the *paidagogos*), while slaves are allowed to do things which he would give his eyes to do, like driving his father's chariot. Why is this? He suggests it is because he is too young, but S. soon shows that it is not a question of age, but of capability and *understanding*. If his parents thought he knew how to do these things, they would not prevent him. Indeed his father would give him his estate to manage if he thought he could manage it better, just as the Athenians entrust the government to those whom they think wise in politics. Moreover no one will accept a person as a friend 'in so far as he is useless'. If L. becomes wise, everyone will be his friend and attached to him, because he will be useful and good, but otherwise not even his parents will love him. This being so, one cannot take pride in things one does not understand. 'And if you, L., still need a teacher, you have not reached understanding.'

L. True.

S. Then you are not proud?

L. I don't think I am.

Thus Socrates, as he promised, has shown how one should speak to a loved one, not spoiling him but teaching him humility. He nearly said so to Hippothales, but remembered in time that H. did not want L. to know he was there. M. now returns, and L. asks S. in a whisper to repeat to him what he has just been saying. S. tells him to do that himself, but he wants S. to say something to M. at least, because M. is an argumentative person and he wants to see him taken down a peg (211b).

So S. begins as usual by lamenting his own ignorance. There is nothing in the world that he longs for more than a good friend, yet he does not even know how one person becomes friend to another.

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M. and L. obviously do, since they have achieved a perfect friendship already. M. must tell him the secret, and his first question is: If one man likes another, which is the friend, the liker or the liked? M. thinks it makes no difference. But *A* may like *B*, yet be actually disliked by *B*, as some lovers are plagued by the thought that while they feel affection for their beloved, the beloved actually hates them. In that case, which is the friend (*philos*)? Neither, thinks M., and withdrawing his former statement, agrees that no creature is a friend to any other unless the other returns the liking.

Very good. Then people cannot like horses (be *philippoi*) or wine or anything else, unless liked by them in return (212d). You cannot even be a philosopher unless wisdom (*sophia*) likes you in return. This being absurd, what is liked is dear (*philon*) to him who likes it, whether or not it likes him in return. A small child is *philon* to its parents even when they punish it and for the moment it hates them. On this argument the liked, not the liker, is the 'friend', and so the object of hatred is an enemy, not the hater. Thus many are liked by their enemies and hated by their friends. This is impossible, therefore the liker must be friend of the liked and the hater the enemy of the hated. So we must conclude as we did before, that one may be a friend (*philos*) of one who is not his friend (is not *philos*, *sc.* is not liked by him) or is even his enemy, when he likes someone who dislikes or even hates him; and so with being an enemy.

At this point M., like others subjected to the Socratic treatment, gives up, and Lysis shyly agrees with S. that the inquiry cannot have been on the right lines. Pleased with his enthusiasm, and judging that M. has earned a rest, S. makes a fresh start with L., suggesting that they look first to the poets, 'our fathers and leaders in wisdom'. Homer says the gods made friends by drawing like to like, and the same idea that like is attracted to its like is found in the writers on nature and the universe.<sup>1</sup> We must limit this to good men, for the wicked are not made friends by proximity. Probably the writers meant that they are not 'alike' – they are indeed so fickle and changeable

<sup>1</sup> For this as a physical principle in Presocratic thought see vols. I and II, indexes s.v. 'like to like'. It accounted specifically for perception, which makes it interesting that S. adds the words καὶ ποιεῖ γνῶριμον to the line of Homer.

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that they are not even self-consistent – and were telling us obliquely that only good men can be friends.

But this will not do (214e). Similar people can do no good to each other which they could not do for themselves, and so, being of no help to each other, will not be mutually attracted. Nor can we say that the good man is friend to the good not *qua* similar but *qua* good, for *qua* good he is self-sufficient, lacking nothing, and so will not be attracted to anything or *philos* to it. Good men will not miss each other when separated nor need each other when together, so they cannot be friends.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps we have it the wrong way round. Hesiod said that similars always quarrel – potter with potter, bard with bard, poor with poor – and feel envy and hatred towards each other. It is opposites which are friendly, from necessity, poor with rich, weak with strong, sick with doctors, ignorant with wise (215d). In nature, dry craves for moisture, heat for cold, bitter for sweet and so on, and opposite provides nourishment for opposite.<sup>2</sup> On this argument it is unlikes which will be friends.

A clever controversialist would soon jump on us here (216a). Enmity is the opposite of friendship, so on our argument the hostile will be friendly to the friendly and vice versa, and the same applies to just and unjust, temperate and profligate. This is impossible, so we were wrong, and neither similars nor opposites can be friends to each other. The argument is making S. dizzy, but the only possibility left is (216c) that what is *neutral* – neither good nor bad – is *philon* to the good (not to another neutral, for that would be a case of similars). A sick man's sickness makes him welcome the doctor. The doctor is good, the sickness bad, but the body which may be either sick or well is neutral. Thus *what is neither good nor bad becomes friendly*

<sup>1</sup> Further difficulty is caused for an English reader by the practical associations of the word *agathon* (good). As the adjective corresponding to *aretē* it conveys much more strongly than the English word the idea of being good *at* something. Cf. vol. III, 90 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> This also was current scientific doctrine, especially in medical writers. For Empedocles the combination of opposite elements was the work of Love (vol. II, 156). Some see also a reference to Heraclitus's 'harmony of opposites', or his theory of the elements 'living each other's death' (vol. I, 435f., 433) and the heavenly bodies 'nourished by exhalation from the earth'. The more straightforward Aristotle mentions Heraclitus and Empedocles by name (*EN* 1155b4–7). See also Schoplick, *Lysis* 40 n. 1.

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*with the good owing to the presence of bad* (217b), but before the presence of the bad in it has made it bad itself. This requires explanation (217d). Some things are themselves what is present to them, others are not. The difference is illustrated by hair whitened with powder and hair naturally white through old age. When a thing has evil in it, but is not yet bad itself, the evil in it makes it desire the good, but when the presence of evil has made it bad, it deprives it of desire, and so of friendship, for the good. Thus philo-sophers are neither the wise nor those so unwise as to be evil. They possess this evil, ignorance, but are not rendered so foolish by it as to think they know what they do not. Now the hunt is really ended, as the boys agree.

But stay – is the quarry a phantom? Look at it this way (218d). If anyone likes, or is a friend to, somebody or something, it must be, they agree, from some cause and for the sake of something; and is that something, for the sake of which a friend is friend to his friend, also *philon*? Since M. does not follow, and S. himself is not quite sure what he means, he returns to the example of doctor and patient. Here the neither-good-nor-bad is friend to the good owing to the bad and hostile (his sickness) for the sake of what is both good and *philon* (health). But if (as they agree) health is both good and liked (*philon*), then on the earlier premise it in turn must be *philon* from some cause and for the sake of something. This process cannot go on indefinitely, with everything being prized not for itself but for something else (219c); there must be a first link in the chain which will not refer us to a further goal but itself be the ‘first friend’, or ultimate object of love, for whose sake all the other things are friends (*phila*, dear, valued). These others, then, turn out to be misnamed, for they are but shadows of the first, not valued for themselves but only as means. Truly *philon* is just that one thing in which all the so-called *phila* culminate. It is not *philon* for the sake of any further *philon*.

Now the good is valued as *philon*. But is it true (as has been said) that it is loved on account of the bad? In that case if there were no evils affecting body, soul or anything, the good would no longer be any use to us, and it would appear that we had only loved it as a remedy, and one no longer needed. It seems we have no need of

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what is good as such and for its own sake. It cannot be that final object of love in which all others culminate.

Again, in a world without evils would there be no more hunger and thirst, or would they exist but not be harmful? An unanswerable question, but even now these and similar desires can be beneficial or neutral as well as harmful; and desires that are not evil need not disappear along with evil. But what we desire is what we like (*philon*), and if what is *philon* remains when evil is gone, evil cannot be the cause of something being *philon*. It looks as if all we have said so far is nonsense, and *desire* is what makes anything liked. Desire is for what one lacks, i.e. what one has been deprived of, and so love (*eros*), friendship (*philia*) and desire are felt for an object which belongs to one.<sup>1</sup> If L. and M. are friends, they must in some way naturally belong to one another (they agree emphatically), and no one desires or loves (with *eros* not *philia*) another unless he is in some way akin to his beloved; and since we have seen that one must needs feel affection for (*philein*) what is naturally akin, a true, not counterfeit, lover must win his beloved's affection (222a). (L. and M. agreed reluctantly, while Hippothales was in raptures.)

Does this conclusion hold? Only if 'akin' differs from 'similar' which we have agreed cannot be *philon* because useless. Assuming that it does, shall we suppose that what is good for someone is always akin to him (222c), or rather good is akin to good, bad to bad, and neutral to neutral? The boys agree to the latter, but it brings us back to statements which we have already rejected, for the unjust and bad will be friends to each other no less than the good will be friend to the good; but if 'akin' and 'good' are the same, the good will be friend only to the good. All possibilities seem now to be exhausted, and S. declares himself beaten. Before he could call on one of the older youths for help, the *paidagogoi* swooped down and carried the

<sup>1</sup> 221 d-e. The word used here (οἰκεῖον, lit. 'of one's own household') is used metaphorically in a way for which several renderings have been suggested: 'belonging to' (J. Wright); 'congenial' (Jowett); 'akin' (Shorey, Grote, Grube); also 'related' (Hoerber, *Phron.* 1959, 24; 'verwandt' Friedlander (his translator follows Jowett); 'wesensverwandt' Pohlenz. Glaser added 'vertraut'. It is coupled with συγγενές (*Rep.* 470 c, 485 c). The word has occurred earlier in the dialogue at 210 d, where S. tells L. that if he becomes wise, everyone will be φίλος καὶ οἰκεῖος to him. Cf. pp. 149 f. below.

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boys off home. Though they all claim to be friends, they have failed to discover what a friend is.

### Comment

There are many opinions about this dialogue, and I must confess to my own, which is simply that it is not a success. Even Plato can nod. Cornford called it 'an obscure and fumbling essay' on the same theme as the *Symposium*, showing that when he wrote it Plato had not reached his mature theory of love. Wilamowitz said much the same thing (*Pl.* 1, 187), and according to Leisegang (*RE* 2410) it is 'mostly' regarded as an early Socratic dialogue which finds its necessary expansion in the *Symposium*.<sup>1</sup> Others however see in the 'friendship' of the *Lysis* something quite different from the 'love' which is the subject of the *Symposium*.<sup>2</sup>

The failure is in method and presentation. Though ostensibly another example of the Socratic method in operation, anyone seeking to discover it would be well advised to turn instead to the *Euthyphro*, *Laches* or *Meno*.<sup>3</sup> Socrates not only gives an unappetizing view of friendship,<sup>4</sup> but appears to be completely at the mercy of the ambiguities of the Greek word for it. Why should he himself be the dupe of these ambiguities, instead of (as elsewhere) having them uttered by someone else – even trapping him into uttering them – in order to lead him to an awareness of them and so assist him maieutically? Or why should he himself indulge in (or be the victim of) sophistic and fallacious arguments without a hint as to the true solution?<sup>5</sup> True, he may do

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Gomperz, *Gr. Th.* II, 382f.: 'The matter of this dialogue need not trouble us; we shall find it developed to greater richness and maturity in the brilliant luminary of which it is the modest satellite.'

<sup>2</sup> A selection of views is mentioned by Hoerber in *Phron.* 1959, 15–17. Foremost defender of the kinship of *Lys.* with *Symp.* is Friedländer: 'the *Lys.* shows the philosophic *Eros* on the level of Plato's early works'. 'The terms "friendship" and "love" are interchangeable throughout.' (*Pl.* II, 102). 'A principal objective pursued in the dialogue' is the relationship of love and education (p. 93). Wilamowitz however (*Pl.* II, 68f.) thought that φίλος and ἐρως stood for fundamentally different emotions and different relations between men.

<sup>3</sup> Pace Edith Hamilton, for whom the *Lys.* 'has no superior' among the dialogues 'as an illustration of Socrates's method' (*Collected D.'s* 145). Her brief prefatory note may serve as antidote to the above, possibly prejudiced, view.

<sup>4</sup> Grote (*Pl.* I, 517f.) said that in *Xen. Mem.* 2.4–6 'we find the real Socrates presenting [friendship] with a juster view of its real complications'. It is pleasant to find the commonly despised Xenophon held up as a mirror of the 'real' S.

<sup>5</sup> Mrs Sprague, speaking of the *Laches*, says (*PUF* 84): 'Thus deliberate ambiguity on the



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this with complacent Sophists, stringing them along and foiling them with the sort of arguments they themselves delight in, but here, if it is deliberate, he is practising his verbal conjuring on boys of an age to be still under *paidagogoi* and liable to a parental whipping (208d-e). If 'his only desire in talking to the boys was to make them use their minds' (E. Hamilton), he chose an outrageously sophisticated and brutal method of doing it. He also appears as a follower of Protagoras in teaching that 'on every subject there are two contrary arguments'. He must have left the poor boys thoroughly bewildered.<sup>1</sup>

The *Lysis* belongs to the group including *Euthyphro*, *Laches* and *Charmides*, which all seek to define a single virtue,<sup>2</sup> and, like the others, ends in apparent failure. In one respect it is the most Socratic of them all, namely the emphasis on the utilitarian motive. *Lysis* will find everyone his friend if he is clever enough to be useful to them. Two good people cannot be friends because they do not need each other's help. Friendship can only be like that which the sick man feels for the doctor, arising from the doctor's ability to rid him of his disease. Friendship is never to be valued for the enjoyment of the relationship itself, but always for some ulterior end.<sup>3</sup> Even when we reach the 'ultimately lovable', loved for its own sake, and even if that means being drawn to one to whom we have a natural affinity, our *philia* still implies desire, and desire implies present lack and deprivation. Some may prefer Aristotle's view that 'those who love each other for the sake of utility do not love each other for themselves, but because of some benefit they get from one another', and that

part of Socrates results in the clarification of this same ambiguity.' This, by contrast, shows up the unsatisfactory way in which, in *Lys.*, ambiguities are *not* cleared up. In her book on Plato's use of fallacy she does not once quote or mention the *Lysis*. Did its use of fallacy defeat even her powers of explanation?

<sup>1</sup> In *Pl.* 1, 188, Wilamowitz says that 'naturally S. adapts his conversation to their powers of understanding', but in vol. II, 71, he speaks more realistically of 'the poor boys, whom S. chivvies with his questions and counter-questions and often deliberately tempts on to the ice'.

<sup>2</sup> It is not one of the four virtues recognized as cardinal in the *Rep.*, but neither is τὸ δῖον, which is definitely a 'part' of virtue in the *Prot.* Cf. also Aristotle, *EN* bk 8 *ad init.*

<sup>3</sup> 218d. This is taken as a premise in subsequent argument, and never denied. The πρῶτον φίλον, when it appears, is not a friend. Throughout the dialogue, the arbitrary switching between masculine (friend, whether giver or receiver of friendship or both) and neuter (anything liked) creates utter confusion which is never cleared up. (Glaser, *W. Stud.* 1935, 63, offers a justification of Plato's frequent use of the neuter which is hardly to be got from the text.)

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their friendship is an inferior variety, comparable to commerce; the perfect kind can only be experienced by good men, who will enjoy each other's company not through any lack, for the happy too can want to spend their days together (*EN* 1158a21).<sup>1</sup> In any case, the explanation by natural affinity is offered only to be rejected like the others.

Socrates's insistence on usefulness as the criterion of value or goodness has been fully explained in vol. III, pp. 462–7, which need not be repeated here. Everything and everybody, from pruning knives to bodily organs and from them to doctors, cooks or weavers, has a function to perform, and must be judged by a product extrinsic to itself; and each has its own particular virtue or excellence (*aretē*) which consists in the ability to perform its function. Yet there must also be an ultimate function which we all have to perform in virtue of our common humanity, and the beneficiary of this function, and of the universal *aretē* necessary for its performance, is the soul. This *aretē* alone is always beneficial, never harmful (*Meno* 87e–89e). The doctor produces health, the merchant money, but health and wealth may alike injure the soul if they are not used with that wisdom which is *aretē*. This is the virtue which Socrates all his life was seeking, as we see him doing in the *Meno*. It cannot have been absent from Plato's mind when he speaks of the 'ultimate object of love' in which all others find their consummation. Yet for the purposes of this conversation with the boys, he does not develop it with any mention of a kind of friendship which is based on knowledge and tends to the good of the *psyche*,<sup>2</sup> but returns abruptly to the more arid question whether we are friends to the good on account of evil, and what would happen if, *per impossibile*, evil ceased to exist.<sup>3</sup>

Crombie sees the main argument as 'intellectual teasing'. Plato is neither tangled in the ambiguities of *philia* nor straightforwardly

<sup>1</sup> For Aristotle see further pp. 154f. below.

<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of the discussion the Socratic point is put to the boy Lysis at its most elementary level, namely that goodness consists in usefulness and demands knowledge of that at which one is good.

<sup>3</sup> γελοῖον τὸ ἐρώτημα, 221a. Neither S. nor Plato believed in a millennium, and S. would have agreed with what P. made him say in a later dialogue (*Theaet.* 176a) that evils can never disappear from this world.

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making his point. He is posing a conundrum which he could solve, but thinks the reader may prefer to solve for himself (*EPD* I, 20). The *Lysis* 'conveys its message not by explicating the ambiguity but by entangling the reader in it' (II, 474). This may be good fun for philosophers, but one can only repeat that if so, his dramatic sensibility was for once at fault in allowing Socrates to inflict it on schoolboys. Grote (*Pl.* I, 513 n. γ), speaking of a confusion which Steinhart thought a joke against the Sophists, could see 'nothing in it except an unconscious inaccuracy in Plato's reasoning'. For Hoerber (*Phron.* 1959, 23) Plato's main point 'seems to be that utility is not the essence of true friendship, particularly of friendship based on similarity of character'; and on an obvious fallacy at 215c he says that Plato 'is cautioning the reader that a proper definition of terms is essential to any discussion of a topic such as friendship'. Plato's Socrates is notoriously indirect in his methods, but even for him this dialogue seems a curious way of setting about it. Plato appears to be holding up Socrates, for whom the correct use of words was the source not only of right thinking but of right living,<sup>1</sup> as a great misuser of language. The failure to make proper distinctions comes from him, not from his interlocutor, and he makes no attempt to correct it, as in other dialogues he leads the way from a crude to a more refined use of terms. Even if those are right who take a kindlier view of Plato's aims and methods in this dialogue, it remains true that anything of importance in it can be found in others, where it will not 'need a Delian diver to get at it'. Stallbaum described Plato's aims by saying (*Lysis* 114) that he dealt with friendship in a sophistic and eristic manner, first to satirize the Sophists' tricks and show that they contributed nothing to the discovery of truth, but also, by this method, to set forth the right view of the causes, nature and final goal of friendship. Perhaps these were his aims, but to pursue the two concurrently overtaxed even Plato's genius. This lack of success, however, is no reason to join the nineteenth-century critics who dismissed it as 'unworthy of Plato' and therefore spurious. Indeed no one else could have written it.

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedo* 115e. See vol. III, 488 n. 1.

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I append a few comments made in reading, before concluding with a consideration of the possible ontological significance of some of its terminology.

211b. Many critics see Menexenus's eristic nature as an important feature of the dialogue. He is 'dreist', 'spitzfindig' and 'keck' (Hanslik, *RE*, xxix. Halbb. 858), 'self-assured' (Hoerber, *Phron.* 1959, 17); Plato gives him 'a higher degree of consciousness and intellectual flexibility than to Lysis' (Friedländer, *Pl.* II, 95). In fact he says little but a docile 'yes' and 'no' (or their equivalents), 'I've no idea' (213c) and 'I don't quite follow' (218e). Glaser (*W. Stud.* 1935, 50) says it is only with the 'eristic' M. that S. begins his eristic 'wrestling with ideas', but from 213d to 215c he carries it on with Lysis. The only eristic in this dialogue is Socrates.

212d. If 'friendship' is reciprocal, one cannot be phil-ippus or phil-oinos unless the horses or the wine return one's affection. As Hoerber rightly says (*l.c.* 21), 'The main argument against reciprocity is a linguistic difficulty in the Greek language'. Friedländer thought Plato aimed at bringing out these verbal ambiguities and even *clarifying* substantial problems which they concealed. Such clarification is more worthy of a Euthydemus or Dionysodorus.

214e-215a. Characters that are similar in being good cannot be friends. Stallbaum pointed out (*Lysis* 100, 113, 151) that the argument rests entirely on treating 'similar' as if it meant 'in every way identical',<sup>1</sup> and 'good' as perfectly and absolutely good, of a goodness never attained by man. That good cannot be friend to good is explicitly denied at *Phdr.* 255b: on the contrary, good cannot help being friend to good.

At 215d the impossibility of retaining 'friend' as the meaning of *philos* is brought out by the absurdity of saying that the poor must be *friends* of the rich because they need their aid. Also, the inclusion of sick man and doctor here is a false antithesis. The contrary of the sick is the healthy, indeed the doctor may himself be ill but none the less necessary to the sick for that. Socrates is presumably thinking of what he expresses at 217a-b, that illness is the opposite of the medical

<sup>1</sup> For the ambiguity of *ὁμοιον* see vol. I, 305 n.

art in one particular respect, namely that one is bad and the other good.

216a. 'The know-alls, the disputatious types, would happily jump on us, and say...' In the context this amounts to an admission that Socrates himself has been, and is, arguing like one of these.

216c<sup>ff</sup>. 'Good' and 'bad' are not the only alternatives, for there may be an intermediate state, neither good nor bad. Plato makes the same point elsewhere, e.g. *Gorg.* 467e, *Symp.* 202a. (*Prot.* 331a, where Socrates equates 'not-just' and 'unjust', is taken by Adam *ad loc.* and others to illustrate neglect of this truth. There is a fallacy there, but the point is not quite the same. See pp. 224f. below.) It is a real advance on the simple 'either-or' dichotomy which had hitherto been naïvely accepted and by Sophists wilfully abused, and its importance is emphasized by the application to philosophers at 218a. Its philosophical significance comes out in the *Republic* (477a), where Plato refines on the Parmenidean dictum 'a thing either is or is not, and is either known or unknown', which had caused such trouble, by suggesting an intermediate stage between being and not-being, knowledge and ignorance. (See pp. 488, 492 below and Glaser, *W. Stud.* 1935, 53f., though it is not necessary to follow him in applying the metaphysical conclusions of the *Republic* to the simple statement here that there is a neutral state between good and bad.)

217b. 'So the neither good nor bad becomes the friend of good owing to the presence of evil.' 'The suggestion is that the relation is regularly one between the possessor of some excellence and someone who aspires to the excellence but has not yet attained it' (Taylor, *PMW* 70). Applied thus to the ethical sphere, this rather dreary argument would acquire some point; but like all the other arguments it is to be abandoned, because (a) a lack of something one desires need not imply the presence of what is bad (220e–221b), (b) it relegates the good to the status of a mere means to an end (218d<sup>ff</sup>).

217d, powdered hair and hair naturally white. Jowett (*Dialogues* 1, 40) called this 'a distinction between property and accident which is a real contribution to the science of logic', and Crombie (*EPD* 1, 21) 'a minor logical point of a constructive kind'. In the Aristotelian

classification, the whiteness of hair naturally white through old age is itself an accident (*Top.* 1 ch. 5, cf. p. 113 above).

218b. This description of philo-sophers as intermediate between the wholly wise (the gods) and the wholly ignorant is truly Platonic (and in origin probably Pythagorean: see vol. 1, 204). Cf. *Symp.* 204a, *Phaedrus* 278d.

218d, 'from some cause and for the sake of something', with examples at 219a-b: 'for the sake of (ἐνεκα) the loved... on account of (διὰ) the hated', 'on account of illness for the sake of health'. Grote (*Pl.* 1, 512) speaks of 'some producing cause and some prospective end', and calls this 'a very clear and important distinction' (513 n. y). It corresponds to Aristotle's efficient and final causation, but as Grote goes on to point out, Plato later confuses the two: at 220e 'for the sake of the hated' should be 'on account of'.

219c-d. The first appearance in Plato of the impossibility of an infinite regress, which was to assume such importance for him and for Aristotle. In the *Parmenides* and Aristotle it occurs as a damaging argument against the theory of Forms, and as an argument for a First Cause it is at the root of Aristotle's theology.

221d-e. The inference that what is desired is what one lacks, and that is what naturally belongs to one (is οἰκεῖον), seems arbitrary, and one may sympathize with Bekker who called the connexion 'quite extraordinarily superficial' (*Philol.* 41, 306, quoted by Glaser, *W. Stud.* 1935, 59 n. 15). That Eros brings together the naturally cognate is said by Aristophanes in the *Symposium*, where however it has acquired point from the myth of the origin of the sexes which he has just related. The first part of the equation, that desire is of what one lacks, is repeated in the *Symposium* by Socrates himself (200e).

222a. It needs no great perspicacity to see in the 'genuine lover' Socrates himself. One need only compare his two main speeches in the *Phaedrus*, especially 255a.

222c-d. (a) What is naturally akin to man is the good (τὰγαθὸν οἰκεῖον). Here, thrown away with the other alternatives, is Plato's real opinion, as can be seen from *Rep.* 586e;<sup>1</sup> and in spite of the

<sup>1</sup> And, I should say, from Diotima's words at *Symp.* 205e. It is not clear to me, as it is to Pembroke (in Long's *Problems in Stoicism*, 137f.), that 'P. is anxious to discredit the

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absurd argument at 214e–215a, one good man is bound to be the friend of another, as we have seen (*Phdr.* 255b, p. 147 above). There seems no reason to follow Glaser (*l.c.* 58ff.) in seeing behind the simple words of the *Lysis* (with the support of the Seventh Letter) the mature Platonic doctrine of the soul's kinship with the Forms.

(b) In agreeing to the second alternative, that good is akin to good, bad to bad etc., the boys are in fact equating 'akin' with 'similar', which they had agreed not to do. (Horn, *Platonst.* 109.)

The end of the dialogue follows the pattern of other early definition-dialogues. The discussion is broken off against Socrates's will, just as it is in the *Euthyphro*. In the *Laches* the company actually agree to continue it the next day. By such devices Plato tells his readers plainly that there is more to be said.

*The Lysis and the doctrine of Forms.*<sup>1</sup> First, a representative selection of opinions. For an uncompromising denial of any trace of the doctrine see Stallbaum's *Lysis* 116, and for the strongest expression of the opposite view, Glaser's article in *W. Stud.* 1935. Von Arnim (*Jugenddialoge* 51) saw in *parusia* the 'germ' of the doctrine, and in the 'ultimately loved' the later Idea of the Good, while admitting that the language does not bring out its full implications. Friedländer could not agree,<sup>2</sup> but Crombie (*EPD* II, 256) thinks Plato's use of the word 'smells strongly of the theory of forms', and must have been intended for readers familiar with it. Wilamowitz, however, in a judicious summing-up (*Pl.* II, 74f.; cf. I, 202f.), thought that a reader acquainted with Plato's whole philosophy would be little edified by the allusive treatment offered here. Taylor (*PMW* 70f.) rather spoilt his case by asserting that 'the technical language of the

idea', nor that he does so in the *Symp.* In the above para. I am also disagreeing with von Arnim in *Rh. Mus.* 1916, 366. For the equation of *οikeῖον* with *ἀγαθόν* in *Charm.*, see below, p. 159.

<sup>1</sup> What is meant by the Platonic doctrine of Forms has been sufficiently explained for present purposes in the discussion of the *Euthyphro* (pp. 114ff. above). Its full content can wait until P. himself chooses to reveal it.

<sup>2</sup> His 'It is primarily a phenomenological analysis' in the English edition (*Pl.* II, 314 n. 6) is scarcely an improvement on the simple 'Das kann ich nicht erkennen' of the German (II, 97 n. 2).

## The Lysis

theory of forms' was so familiar to 'the lads' Lysis and Menexenus that Socrates had to warn them not to be misled by it!

Two notions are relevant: the 'presence' (*parusia*) of a quality in that which it characterizes, and the 'primary *philon*', which is loved for its own sake alone. Plato speaks (217d-e) of the *presence* of 'white' and 'bad' or alternatively of an object as *possessing* these attributes, and correctly distinguishes accidental from natural, or all-pervading, characterization. This is terminology which, though used later of the relationship between Forms and particulars, would not sound strange in any tongue, least of all in Greek, in which adjectival phrases like 'the hot', 'the cold', 'the white' had hovered ambiguously in meaning between substance and quality. (Cf. p. 119 with n. 1 above.) It need not have any doctrinal significance.<sup>1</sup>

The 'primary *philon*' or object of love is rather different. Socrates calls it 'that which is primary object of love, for whose sake the others are prized'. The others are like phantoms or imitations of it,<sup>2</sup> which may deceive us, whereas it is 'that first thing which is truly (ὡς ἀληθῶς) object of love' (219c-d). 'In reality (τῷ ὄντι) that thing itself (ἐκείνο αὐτό) is the object of love in which all these so-called friendships terminate. . . The really loved is not loved for the sake of another loved thing' (220b). This is the kind of language that Plato applies to the Forms of his developed doctrine, and the 'primary object of love', the goal of all subordinate friendships and likes, became in the *Republic* the Form of the Good, though it is not here formally identified with good.<sup>3</sup> Moreover its relation to anything else called friend or object of liking is in one respect like that between a Form and its sensible manifestations, namely that they resemble it

<sup>1</sup> It is used in a similarly non-technical way in later dialogues too. Cf. *Gorg.* 497e, *Rep.* 437e; also *Charm.* 158e. Nor should one see metaphysical significance in the words παραγίγνεσθαι and ἀπογίγνεσθαι as applied to health and disease at *Alc. I*, 126a.

<sup>2</sup> The word (εἰδωλον) is used of a phantom (*Il.* 5.449, and cf. Plato, *Theaet.* 150c), ghost (*Od.* 11.476), dream, shadow, reflection and representation in painting (all in Plato, *Soph.* 266 b-c). The common element, contained in its etymology, is an appearance of something without reality. It is therefore incorrect to say, as Allen does (*Euthyphro* 71 n. 2), that its use does not imply resemblance in the ordinary sense.

<sup>3</sup> It was a bad slip on von Arnim's part to say (*Jugendd.* 53) that this 'highest goal of all endeavour' is called τὸ ἀγαθόν at 220c. The ἀγαθόν which is the subject of the new argument beginning at 220b is not the ultimate good, but precisely that which is good because useful for some ulterior purpose. It is ἀγαθόν in its common meaning of good *for* something. At 220d-e, S. actually says that the πρῶτον φίλον bears no resemblance to it.



## Early Socratic dialogues

(in being *phila*) but fall short of its perfection. (Cf. *Phaedo* 74d–e.) In the *Lysis* the imperfection takes the special form of not being desirable for their own sake, and we must admit that the line of argument is quite different. In contrast to the *Euthyphro* and *Laches*, the relationship is not described as that of form and instance at all, nor is the primary *philon* called the single form in all *phila* by which they are *phila* (*Euthyphro*), or ‘that whose nature runs through them all’ (*Laches* 192c). We miss the familiar picture of Socrates demanding a general definition, receiving instead an instance or instances, and pointing out the mistake. He says at the end (222b, 223b) that he has been trying to discover ‘what is a friend’, but what he asked was ‘How do two people become friends?’, and to this his subsequent questions are appropriate.<sup>1</sup> Sooner or later the Socrates of the *Meno*, *Protagoras* or *Republic* (354c) would object that it is hopeless to tackle such questions without first deciding what friendship *is*, but this never occurs to him here. His last question – Can any friendship be disinterested? – leads to a conception which, if we knew the *Republic*, suggests the Idea of the Good, but without this knowledge of the later dialogue there would be little or nothing to suggest the edifice of doctrine displayed in *Phaedo*, *Republic* or *Symposium*. In their belief that the full conception of the Idea of the Good is present in the *Lysis*, scholars have been greatly influenced by parallels in phraseology. (The most striking are collected by Schoplick, *Lys.* 55.) Some are more impressive than others, but in any case one of the biggest difficulties in interpreting Plato’s thought genetically arises from the fact that, as is only to be expected, the same terms recur with increasing depth of meaning as it advances from his Socratic phase to his mature, two-tier metaphysic. The ‘primarily and truly loved’ will be absorbed into the Idea of the Good, but it is not in this dialogue that cause of truth, knowledge and being, itself beyond being, of which we read in *Rep.* 6 (508e–509b).

There will always be two schools among Plato’s readers, the one refusing to read back into the earlier dialogues the teaching of the later unless it is openly expressed, the other maintaining that they

<sup>1</sup> Hence R. Robinson (*PED* 49) classifies the *L.* as an ‘Is *X Y*?’ dialogue rather than a ‘What is *X*?’ one: ‘The explicit question is not what friendship is but what its condition is.’

## The *Lysis*

must be interpreted in the light of that teaching from hints dropped by Plato when, for dramatic or other reasons, he did not want to introduce them expressly. For the *Lysis*, Glaser's article is the outstanding example of the latter school.<sup>1</sup> The policy in this volume will be more like the former, to assume no more than is said in a dialogue or can reasonably be inferred from it, without bringing in the whole of Plato's philosophy as it is expressed elsewhere. Looked at in this way, Plato in the *Lysis* is still at an early stage in his progress from his master's 'One thing I know', namely that there are absolute moral values (p. 88 above), to his own mature philosophy. Here we follow Wilamowitz (*Pl.* II, 75). Having quoted the expressions by which Plato designates the πρῶτον φίλον, he continues:

So indeed he speaks later, when he has realized that what he is seeking lies in another realm, the key to which is not *philia* but *Eros*, the link between the earthly and the eternal. But of this link and this realm he does not yet know, and once he knows it, he no longer speaks of any τῷ ὄντι φίλον [truly *philon*]. This assigns the *Lysis* its place in Plato's intellectual development just as the style fixes it in the series of his writings.<sup>2</sup>

Should the other school be right, our procedure may still have value as an expository method; but it does seem an extraordinary supposition that Plato evolved a doctrine of eternal Forms known by an immortal soul in another world, as expounded in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, then *first* expressed it (for all agree these dialogues are earlier) in this teasingly allusive way by a series of conundrums, and only later condescended to explain it fully.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For instance on pp. 165 f. he says (I translate): 'So in the *Lysis* is the way from the Pre-socratic and Socratic to the Platonic theory of friendship pointed out to the initiated, admittedly only if one recalls the later utterances whose content already lurks unexpressed in the early dialogues.' He even draws freely on *Ep.* 7 to reveal in *Lys.* the kinship of the soul with the Ideas, and a doctrine that friendship depends not on affinity between the parties but affinity between both of them and τὸ πρᾶγμα, i.e. the εἶδος. He is followed by Schoplick, for whom *Lys.* proceeds on two levels, with both a 'foreground' and a 'background' meaning (p. 44). The reason for the final *aporia* is that words are used ambiguously, in both their Platonic and popular senses. Schoplick's explanation of this procedure seems half-hearted (83 f.). Might it not rather be the case that the 'Platonic' sense is still not clearly detached from the other in P.'s mind?

<sup>2</sup> Among those expressing similar views are Grote (*Pl.* I, 523, 'approaches to, but is not coincident with, the Idea of the Good'), Grube (who speaks of 'clear evidence of a slowly developing vocabulary', *P.'s T.* 8) and Leisegang (*RE* 2411).

<sup>3</sup> Witte (*W. von G. u. B.* 6) calls this view an 'Abwertung' of the earlier dialogues under the influence of Wilamowitz. It is however the impression that I receive from Plato's own

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### ADDITIONAL NOTE: ARISTOTLE AND THE 'LYSIS'

Throughout the *Lysis* one wishes that Plato would take the excellent advice of his own Socrates in the *Charmides* (163 d): 'I give you leave to assign to any word what meaning you please: only make clear, whenever you utter a word, what it is that you are applying it to.'<sup>1</sup> In his discussion of *philia* and its cognates in the *Ethics* (bk 8) Aristotle has cleared up many of the confusions of the dialogue in such a concise and businesslike way that the temptation to quote some of what he says is irresistible. He begins by noting the very wide application of the term, and explicitly limiting his own discussion to the human sphere. Next he says that we must first consider the *object* of liking (τὸ φιλητόν), thus freeing us at once from the active-passive ambiguity of *philos*. We must not, he says, speak of *philia* for inanimate objects, for (a) they cannot return it, and (b) we do not wish for their good. Here he has a dig at Plato (*Lysis* 212 d): one does not wish wine well, but only that it may keep for one's own enjoyment, whereas a friend in ordinary usage is one to whom one must wish good for his own sake.

There are three kinds of friendship, first, friendship for ulterior advantage, and second, friendship for pleasure. Both these may be called accidental friendships, since the friend is not loved for his own sake but only in so far as he provides benefit or pleasure. Hence they are easily broken. It is to the useful class that friendship between opposites belongs, poor and rich, ignorant and learned (1159 b 12, *Lysis* 215 d). Thirdly there is the perfect friendship which springs up between those who are alike in being good. Each loves the other for himself alone and their friendship lasts as long as their goodness. This friendship includes mutual benefit and pleasure, and it is lasting, for virtue is a stable characteristic. It is rare, because such men are rare, and it needs time to ripen, whereas the first two kinds may exist between bad men, or bad and good, or the neither-bad-nor-good and either the bad or the good. But a certain measure of equality is necessary. Two people cannot expect to be friends if there is a great disparity between them, whether in virtue and vice or in wealth or status. The effect of this latter condition, however, is mitigated when he says later (1161 b 5) that although one cannot feel friendship for a slave *qua* slave, one can disregard his status and feel friendship for him as a man.<sup>2</sup>

texts, and I find it no detraction from the interest and importance of the earlier works. What Wilamowitz says in *PL*, 1, 202 f., is true and valuable. The privilege of watching the gradual growth to maturity of the ideas of a man like Plato is no small one.

<sup>1</sup> A precept that can be transposed straight into modern phraseology, as Levinson has pointed out (Anton and Kustas, *Essays* 273).

<sup>2</sup> Adkins (*CQ* 1963, 37 ff.) argues that even Aristotle's perfect kind of friendship is motivated

## The Charmides

### (6) THE CHARMIDES<sup>1</sup>

*Date.* It is generally agreed to belong to the early group, though, like others, it is variously placed within it.<sup>2</sup> Some writers avoid the question, worried perhaps by the way in which it seems to combine rather crude and early characteristics with more advanced problems like that of a 'knowledge of knowledge'. Considerations on pp. 163f. below suggest that it comes late in the early, 'Socratic' group.

*Dramatic date.* Socrates has just returned from campaigning at Potidaea (153a and b), so the conversation takes place at or soon after 432.<sup>3</sup> He is in his prime, just under forty, and Plato is not yet born.

*Characters and scene.* The opening scene has been described as a glorification of Plato's family connexions (Burnet, *T. to P.* 208). His relatives Critias and Charmides are the chief speakers with Socrates, at 155a their descent from Solon is mentioned, and at 158a Plato's stepfather Pyrilampes is eulogized. As to Charmides, there is tragic irony in the portrait of the future member of the oligarchic tyranny, killed like his cousin in battle with the democrats in 403 (Xén. *Hell.* 2.4.19), as a modest and ingenuous youth, as good as he is beautiful. Critias is older, though still a young man, and is the guardian of Charmides (155a, 176c).<sup>4</sup>

As in the *Lysis* (p. 135 above), the characters exemplify in their own persons the trait which is the subject of the dialogue. Charmides

by self-interest and based on equal social standing (p. 43), but does not mention the passage about a slave. On Adkins's view of the general Greek attitude see also O'Brien, *Socr. Parad.* 31 n. 18.

<sup>1</sup> For useful bibliography see the notes to Herter's 1970 article.

<sup>2</sup> A few examples: later than *Lysis*, von Arnim (*Jugendd.* 63f., 138), Thompson (*Phaedr.* xxvi); closely related to it (its twin), Wilamowitz (*Pl.* 1, 187, 189). Ritter (*Essence* 27, reviving an older view) puts *Charm.* in the first of six groups and *Lysis* in the fourth, with *Symp.* and *Phaedo*. Presupposes *Euthydemus*, Erbse (*Hermes* 1968, 37); a little earlier than *Euthyd.*, von Arnim (*o.c.* 112). See also Raeder, *P.'s Ph. Ent.* 97, Tuckey, *Charm.* 1, Ross, *PTI* 11.

<sup>3</sup> After the battle at Potidaea in 432 (*CAH* v, 186 and 475; Hammond, *Hist.* 660). See also Witte, *o.c.* 41 f. S.'s service at Potidaea is mentioned again at *Apol.* 28e and *Symp.* 219e.

<sup>4</sup> For Plato's relationship to Critias and Charmides see above, p. 11. That Charmides in youth was exceptionally modest and retiring is repeated by Xen. (*Mem.* 3.7), who says that Socrates persuaded him to enter public life. Plato mentions him again in the *Prot.* (315a) among the Sophist's followers. A full account of Critias is given in vol. III, 298-304. See also Tuckey's appraisal of both (*Charm.* 16f.) and Witte, *W. v. G. u. B.* 46-53.

## Early Socratic dialogues

is introduced as possessing it to the highest degree (157d), and Socrates shows himself the very embodiment of it by his control over the passionate feelings aroused in him by the sight of Charmides's beauty.<sup>1</sup> Once more the setting is vividly portrayed. The day after his return from the war Socrates 'resumes his regular habits' and visits a palaestra<sup>2</sup> to catch up on his two main interests, philosophy and the young (153d), though first he has to satisfy the curiosity of his friends, overjoyed at his safe return, about the events of the campaign.

*Sophrosynē*. Like *philon* in the *Lysis*, this quality (and its adjective *sophrōn*), for whose sake the whole discussion is set in train, needs some comment before we can approach the dialogue.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere Plato speaks of it (*Rep.* 430e–431b) as an orderly and harmonious disposition showing itself in the mastery of certain pleasures and desires, achieved when the better part of us governs the worse. Later still, in the *Laws* (710a), he calls the mere abstention from pleasures a popular, or vulgar, version of *sophrosynē* which is not worth much on its own, in contrast to the 'more exalted kind' which is equated with wisdom or knowledge (φρόνησις). There is no doubt that in popular parlance, shared by the Sophists,<sup>4</sup> self-control was the main ingredient of *sophrosynē*; whereas it was Socrates who 'exalted it' by 'compelling it to be knowledge'.<sup>5</sup> Since we know that this unification as knowledge was his (and Plato's) conclusion about *all* the virtues, it will not surprise us if this proves to be the real conclusion of the *Charmides*.

<sup>1</sup> On this see vol. III, 394. The primary meaning of σωφροσύνη, at least in ordinary usage, was self-control.

<sup>2</sup> The palaestra of Taureas, opposite the temple of the Queen (Persephone). For the topographical details see Witte, *o.c.* 40f., and for Taureas himself Wilam., *Pl.* I, 190 and Burnet, *T. to P.* 190.

<sup>3</sup> Helen North's *Sophrosyne* aims at explaining the history of the term in the light of political, social, religious and economic conditions. For shorter accounts see A. Kollman in *W. Stud.* 1941, de Vries in *Mnem.* 1943, Tuckey, *Charm.* 5–9, D. Lanza in *St. Ital. di fil. cl.* 1965, O'Brien, *Socr. Par.* 25f. with n. 9, and Witte, *o.c.* 10–24.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Antiphon fr. 58 (vol. III, 259).

<sup>5</sup> φρόνησις and ἐπιστήμη are equated by Plato. See e.g. *Meno* 88b, p. 265 below. The common meaning of σωφροσύνη is further illustrated at *Gorg.* 491d (note ὥσπερ οἱ πολλοί) and *Symp.* 196c. Cf. also *Phaedrus* 237e. That Socrates equated σωφροσύνη and σοφία, because of the close connexion which he maintained between having knowledge and acting on it, is remarked on by Xenophon, *Mem.* 3.9.4.

## *The Charmides*

Mastery of the baser desires is not mentioned among the definitions offered by Charmides and Critias in this dialogue. This, Witte suggests (*o.c.* 39), is because they represent, not the popular or demotic element, but different ideals current in the aristocratic circle of Plato's own family. The emphasis, in the introductory part, on the nobility of the company is certainly remarkable and at 157d-e Socrates says that his noble ancestry makes it only natural that Charmides should be outstandingly *sophrōn*. Nevertheless there is much to be said for Friedländer's view (*Pl.* II, 8of.) that, as with courage in the *Lysis*, Plato is guiding the reader towards his philosophical conception of *sophrosynē* as coincident with the whole of virtue as a unity, not made up of distinct parts. It would be like him to use even the prejudices of his characters to further his own cause in this way. One reason for our own difficulty in explaining what *sophrosynē* meant to a Greek is that being a social ideal, it varied at different times as customs and beliefs altered, and at the same time between different social classes. When religion was a strong force, it certainly included a properly deferential attitude of man towards the gods. Moreover in the latter part of the fifth century both the popular and the traditional aristocratic norms were being challenged in favour of the out-and-out selfish tyranny of the strong man, the view represented by Callicles and opposed by Plato in the *Gorgias*. (See vol. III, 101 ff.) *Sophrosynē* in the ordinary sense Callicles dismisses as folly and cowardice (491c-e). This disparagement of it, says Plato in another context (*Rep.* 560d), marks the transition from the oligarchic to the democratic and anarchic character; and Plato himself is echoing almost word for word the remarks of Thucydides on the changing values of ethical terms under the stresses of the Peloponnesian War.<sup>1</sup> The pleasure-principle of Antiphon is an example of the same tendency.

For Charmides and Critias *sophrosynē* was a virtue. How they conceived it will emerge from their attempts to define it in the dialogue. Enough has been said to show the impossibility of trying to represent it by a single English word,<sup>2</sup> but if one is needed 'self-control' is probably the least inadequate, or in some contexts 'self-discipline'.

<sup>1</sup> Vol. III, 84f. The striking resemblance is noted by Witte, *o.c.* 24.

<sup>2</sup> A few attempts to render it in different languages may however be enlightening. Cicero

## Early Socratic dialogues

### The dialogue

(Reported form, narrated by Socrates)

Socrates's question who among the young excels in wisdom or beauty elicits such a chorus of praise for the good looks of Charmides that he declares the youth must indeed be *hors concours* if only the inner man matches the outer. Reassured on this point, he meets Charmides and when the shock of the boy's beauty permits him to speak, he pretends (on a suggestion of Critias) to be able to impart a cure for headache learned from a Thracian medicine-man. But as Greek doctors claim that a local complaint cannot be cured unless the whole body is healthy, the Thracian declared that his charm would only work if the soul too was healthy. Cure of the soul is effected by good *logoi* which implant *sophrosynē*, and S. had to swear that he would not impart the physical cure to anyone who did not submit his soul for treatment as well.

Critias assures S. that Ch. already possesses *sophrosynē*, so is ready for the charm, but Ch. himself expresses a modest doubt. Let them, then, look into it together. If Ch. possesses *sophrosynē*, he must have some idea (δόξα) what sort of thing it is (ὅτι ἐστὶν καὶ ὁποῖόν τι). Can he tell them? Ch. thinks (*First definition*) that it is a kind of quietness or sedateness – in walking, conversation, and behaviour in general. This S. refutes by first getting Ch. to agree that *sophrosynē* is a good thing and then citing instances of occupations both physical and mental in which speed and intense activity are preferable to quietness or slowness.

After more thought Ch. suggests (*Second definition*) that it is the capacity to feel shame, the same as modesty (*aidōs*),<sup>1</sup> but S. objects, on

would call it *temperantia*, *moderatio*, *modestia* or *frugalitas* (*Tusc.* 3.8.16). Then we have 'sagesse' (Croiset), 'Sittsamkeit und Selbstbeherrschung' (Wilamowitz), 'Selbstbescheidung' (Gauss), 'Besonnenheit' (Horn, Witte, Ebert), 'Mässigkeit' (Classen), 'sobriety' (Burnet), 'self-control' (Cornford and others; Grube adds 'and moderation'), 'temperance' (Jowett). The last, though misleading, is probably the commonest English rendering.

<sup>1</sup> On this word cf. vol. III, 66, and the references in Witte, *W. v. G. u. B.* 31 n. 33. Tuckey p. 11 describes it as an aristocratic sense of honour, and this, he says, throws considerable light on Ch.'s use of αἰδώς and αἰσχύνη. Note the association of it with σωφροσύνη in the behaviour of the 'good horse' of the soul (*Phaedrus* 253d). The two are associated also in Eur. *Hippol.*, ll. 78–80, and Witte (p. 66) quotes a 4th-cent. epigram in which σωφροσύνη is the daughter of αἰδώς.

## The Charmides

the simple authority of Homer, that modesty is not a good thing for everyone.

Well, Ch. has 'heard it said' that *sophrosynē* means (*Third definition*) 'doing one's own', minding one's own business. Can this be the answer? Here S. inflicts some shameless sophistry on the innocent boy. Equating 'doing' with 'making',<sup>1</sup> he asks if it would be good for a society if everyone made and washed his own clothes, was his own cobbler, potter and everything else. Obviously it would not, but this is to stand the ordinary meaning of 'minding one's own business' on its head. S. claims it is the obvious meaning, and concludes that whoever defined *sophrosynē* in this way must have been speaking in riddles.

Critias had been showing growing signs of impatience, thereby confirming S.'s suspicions that he was the author of the definition. Ch., anxious to hand over the discussion, provokes him further into a burst of anger, and he takes up the defence himself.

Cr. begins correctly by pointing out that making is not doing. A craftsman may 'make the things of others' (e.g. shoes for dozens of customers) but at the same time be *doing* his own business.<sup>2</sup> Then, quoting Hesiod's 'No work brings disgrace',<sup>3</sup> he claims that Hesiod could have had no low or disreputable occupations in mind. He meant 'good and useful' works, for these alone are what properly belong to a man,<sup>4</sup> and it is in this sense that *sophrosynē* is 'doing one's own'. It amounts, then, simply to this, that Cr. defines *sophrosynē* as (*Fourth definition*) 'the doing of good things'.

Questioned by S., Cr. agrees that whoever is *sophrōn* must know

<sup>1</sup> ἐργάζεσθαι τε καὶ πράττειν, 162a.

<sup>2</sup> The point was more difficult for a Greek, because whereas πράττειν meant solely doing or acting, ποιεῖν was used for both acting and making. τί ποιεῖς; usually meant 'What are you doing?', but with a direct object (a house, ship, statue etc.) it meant making or creating. To add to the confusion, ἐργα meant both deeds (as object of πράττειν) and material 'works', as of a sculptor, builder etc. (as object of ποιεῖν), to say nothing of tilled lands (relevant to Cr.'s introduction of Hesiod).

To distinguish ποιεῖν from πράττειν is not, as Tuckey claims (p. 20), sophistical. At *Euthyd.* 284b-c their confusion is used to prove a sophism.

<sup>3</sup> *W. and D.* 311. The accusation of misusing this line to justify reprehensible activities was brought against Socrates himself. See *Xen. Mem.* 1.2.56, and *Witte, o.c.* 81.

<sup>4</sup> οἰκεία. On this word see pp. 142n. 1, 149 above. *Witte (o.c. 83)* says that its equation with καλὰ καὶ ὠφέλιμα betrays Cr.'s aristocratic affiliations. As pointed out on pp. 149f, Plato himself adhered to it; but his idea of goodness went deeper than the snobbish ideal of Cr.



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that he is. But people frequently do acts which prove good and beneficial without knowing what the effect will be.<sup>1</sup> When this is pointed out, Cr. frankly<sup>2</sup> withdraws his suggestion. He cannot allow that a man can be *sophrōn* who does not know that he is, in fact he believes (*Fifth definition*) that 'to know oneself', as the Delphic inscription demands, is the very essence of this virtue. He would like to forget all the previous discussion, and concentrate on proving that the true definition of *sophrosynē* is self-knowledge.

S. agrees to consider it. *Sophrosynē* is, it seems, a kind of knowledge or science. Other sciences, e.g. of crafts like medicine and architecture, have their products. What good product can we assign to the knowledge of oneself?<sup>3</sup> Cr. objects that this is to treat all sciences as alike, which they are not. There are theoretical sciences which have no such product. True, but at least one can say of them all that they are sciences of something other than themselves – arithmetic of numbers, and so on. What is *sophrosynē* knowledge of, other than itself? But Cr. is a different customer from Ch. 'There you go again!' he retorts. This is just the *difference* between it and other sciences, that it alone is knowledge of itself – and, adds Cr., of the other sciences as well.

Ignoring (with Cr.) the apparent difference between the statements that *sophrosynē* is (a) a man's knowledge of himself and (b) a knowledge of itself, i.e. of knowledge, S. gets Cr. to agree that knowledge of knowledge must include knowledge of ignorance. Hence the *sophrōn* will know himself in the sense of knowing the limits of his own knowledge, and be capable of judging what another knows and what he thinks he knows but does not. What they have to ask is whether such knowledge is (a) possible and (b) of any value. Can there be a knowledge with no other object but itself and other species of knowledge? It sounds absurd, if we compare it with other cognitive faculties or with the emotions. We cannot imagine sight which sees itself and not colours, hearing which hears itself and not sounds,

<sup>1</sup> S.'s point that a doctor does not know whether his cures will do good or harm is explained by *Laches* 195 c (p. 129 above).

<sup>2</sup> 'If you think that any admission of mine must lead to this result, I would rather take it back, nor would I be ashamed to say I was wrong' (164 c–d). Friedlander (*o.c.* 73) calls this 'a move characteristic of a disciple of the Sophists', but made in these terms it is surely a sign of grace.

<sup>3</sup> This pragmatic assumption of S. goes unchallenged at *Euthyd.* 291 d–292 a.

desire or wish which are not for pleasant or good things but for themselves, and similarly with love or fear, or an opinion which is of itself and other opinions rather than of the usual objects of opinion. There follows (168b) a passage in which a peculiarity of the Greek language enables Plato to draw a facile analogy between the objective and comparative uses of the genitive case. Knowledge is relative, it must be *of* something (τινός); and what is larger is larger *than* something (also τινός); and if anything were larger, heavier etc. than itself it would also be smaller, lighter etc.<sup>1</sup> The general point that emerges is that whatever exercises its function in relation to itself will have the character (οὐσία) of that to which its function is related. Thus to hear itself, hearing must be audible, to see itself sight must be coloured. With comparatives the reflexive relationship is clearly impossible, but as to subject and object, S. declares himself incapable of deciding for certain whether anything can exercise its powers on itself (he adds the examples of self-burning heat and a self-moving motion), whether, if so, this applies to knowledge, and whether, if it does, this knowledge of knowledge is *sophrosynē*.

Since Cr. has been reduced to equal perplexity, S. suggests that they assume for the present that knowledge of knowledge is possible, and go on to the question of its usefulness. Will it enable a man to know what he knows and what he does not know? Cr. thinks that is just what 'knowledge of knowledge' means, but S. is sceptical. It is none of the special sciences – not knowledge of medicine for instance, or politics – but only that peculiar one which recognizes knowledge as such. Hence a man equipped with it, but not with knowledge of medicine or music or architecture, cannot thereby judge of *what* he knows or does not know, but only *that* he knows. Nor can he test the knowledge of others. He cannot tell an expert physician from a quack, for that requires a knowledge of medicine. He will simply be aware that the man has a certain knowledge, but what it is knowledge of, *sophrosynē*, conceived as knowledge, will not tell him. Such knowledge serves no useful purpose. It would be different if it did enable us to know what we and others know and what we don't.

<sup>1</sup> Crombie (*EPD* 1, 21) thinks the logical point about irreflexive relations must have been added by Plato for its own sake, because it is not essential to the context.

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With that knowledge we would lead good lives, households would be well organized and cities well governed; for we should never act in ignorance, nor let our subordinates do so, but always turn to those with the relevant knowledge. With error removed, everything would be well done and we should all be happy.

Perhaps we were setting our sights too high. The benefit of *sophrosynē* as it now appears – knowledge of knowledge and ignorance but not of any special science – may be simply that, having it *in addition* to any subject a man is learning, he will learn more easily, see things more clearly, and examine others more effectively. In any case (says S., continuing his rather random reflections), suppose we grant that *sophrosynē* is what we hoped at first – a knowledge of what one knows and does not know – would it do all that I have just claimed for it? Admittedly we would never be taken in by quack doctors, incompetent navigators, poor workmanship in material goods, false prophets and so on. But would all this knowledge bring us happiness?

Well, thinks Cr. (doubtless reminding S. of his own favourite theme), you won't easily achieve the good life if not through knowledge. Yes, but *what* knowledge? Of a craft like shoemaking or working in metal, wood or wool? Of health, or even of all things past, present and future? Simply, says Cr. (*Sixth definition*), the knowledge of what is good and what bad. In that case, complains S., he has been misled. It is not knowledge as such that brings happiness, but knowledge of good and evil. Without that, medicine will heal none the less, cobbling will shoe us and navigation save our lives at sea; but none of these will be carried out for our good. Yet it is not *sophrosynē*, i.e. not the knowledge of knowledge, but of good and evil. Cr. wants to say (in somewhat metaphorical terms) that *sophrosynē*, being 'sovereign over' all kinds of knowledge, will 'govern' the knowledge of good and evil too. But we agreed that it is none of the special crafts like medicine, but solely knowledge of knowledge. It will not therefore produce benefit any more than health, since we have just assigned that to a different art. So S. concludes that he must be a fool to have turned *sophrosynē* into something useless when everyone agrees that it is the best of all things. Clearly we have not discovered

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its nature, in spite of making all sorts of concessions. We granted, against the argument, that there is a knowledge of knowledge, and that it could recognize the products of other kinds of knowledge, in order to allow that the *sophrōn* knew that he knew what he knew and that he did not know what he did not know, though it is impossible to have any knowledge of what one does not know. Still the argument mocked us by proving that *sophrosyne* was useless. It would be sad to think that Charmides will be no better off for all his beauty and *sophrosynē*, but it cannot be true. It is just that S. is hopelessly bad at investigation and argument.

### *Comment*

The *Charmides* is a curious and difficult dialogue, described with some feeling by Crombie as one 'whose point it is very hard to see' (EPD I, 211). It repeats familiar Socratic elements: the ignorance of Socrates, the paramount need to tend the *psyche*, the search for definition of a particular virtue, the insistence that if Charmides is temperate he must have an idea what temperance is, criticism of the definitions offered and apparent failure of them all, the idea that *sophrosynē* (like any virtue) involves self-knowledge. But the Socratic tenets themselves lead to surprising difficulties if one follows out their implications. Socrates said he had only one advantage over other men: not in possessing any positive knowledge but in knowing his own ignorance. But how does one know what one does not know? It sounds like a contradiction. Does it simply mean knowing *that* one does not know? But then one must ask: knowing that one does not know *what*? Again, the Delphic injunction 'Know thyself' was at the heart of Socrates's teaching. Here however it leads to the assertion that *sophrosynē* is knowledge of itself, and the question is seriously, confusingly and fruitlessly<sup>1</sup> discussed whether and how there can be a knowledge of knowledge (for knowledge regularly has an object outside itself, as medical knowledge has health), and if there can, what would be the use of it. It is reasonable to conclude

<sup>1</sup> There are of course other opinions. Gauss (*Handkomm.* 1.2.98) holds that, in view of the discussion of knowledge of knowledge, if P. had left us nothing but the *Charm.*, he would still have to be reckoned among the greatest philosophers of all time.

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that Plato, by temperament a philosopher rather than a practical moralist, having under the personal influence of Socrates enthusiastically embraced the Socratic code, is beginning to subject it to a more dispassionate examination and to find its philosophical implications genuinely puzzling. The work reflects his own perplexity and some early attempts to resolve it, a task for which the dialogue form is supremely fitted; and in contrast to the *Lysis*, it does at least show Socrates teaching a boy to think, and talking on his level in a not unkindly way.<sup>1</sup>

*Introductory conversation.* An obvious purpose of the conversation is to fix the character of Socrates before the dialectical part begins: his twin passions, philosophy and the young, his susceptibility to youthful beauty (but with a preference for inward, rather than outward and physical, beauty), his role as physician of the *psyche*. He is the philosophical lover of the *Phaedrus*, the 'genuine lover' of *Lysis* 222a. At *Symp.* 222a-b Alcibiades mentions Charmides as one of those who have mistaken Socrates for a lover in the vulgar sense. In the story of the Thracian sage, Socrates draws his favourite parallel between medicine and moral education, a legacy from the Sophists (extending even to the analogy between *logoi* and the doctor's remedies; see vol. III, 167f. and 187 n. 3) which Plato maintained from the *Apology* on. The climax of the great discussion of the nature of justice in the *Republic* is that doing right and doing wrong 'are no different from health and sickness: the one occurs in the body, the other in the soul'.<sup>2</sup> In fact Socrates has already, before the discussion begins, given his own view of the nature of *sophrosynē*, in the light of which all the attempts of Charmides and Critias are to be seen: it is nothing less than health of the soul.

*First and second definitions.* Charmides makes no objection when Socrates equates quiet behaviour (ἡσυχιότης) with slowness (βραδυτής), doubtless because they went together in the traditional ideal in which

<sup>1</sup> A useful conspectus and criticism of earlier views is given by Witte, *W. von G. u. B.* 1-9, 'Interpretation der Interpretationen'.

<sup>2</sup> 444c. Cf. also *Gorg.* 464a ff., 477a ff., 504b-d. Thus the thesis of the mythical Thracian was thoroughly Greek. It is attributed to Hippocrates at *Phaedrus* 270c.

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he was brought up. The sayings of Chilon, one of the Seven Sages, contain, besides an admonition to behave quietly and peaceably and shun talkativeness, a warning against haste in the street (DK vol. 1, p. 63). In Aristophanes the 'old education' in *sophrosynē* enjoined silence and orderly walking in the streets (*Clouds* 961-4). Chilon was a Spartan (cf. *Prot.* 343a), and for a high-born Athenian Sparta was the model, where it was approved practice 'to walk the streets in silence, not looking round but only at what is before one's feet' (Xen. *Rep. Lac.* 3.4). Critias himself wrote eulogistic accounts of Sparta in prose and verse. Thus both these definitions of *sophrosynē* are just what one would expect from a youth like Charmides. Later, in a more mature analysis in the *Politicus* (306c-307b), Plato describes restraint and slowness, and speed and vigour, as equally admirable qualities, either of which, however, could be displayed unseasonably or to excess. The ideal character is a blend of the two (310d-e).<sup>1</sup>

To get from his respondent the admission (159c) that a virtue, or virtue itself, is necessarily good is common form in Socrates's method of refutation. (Cf. *Laches* 192c, *Meno* 87d, *Prot.* 349e.) He can then argue syllogistically against the proposition that *V* (a virtue) is *x*: *V* is necessarily good, *x* is sometimes bad, therefore *V* is not *x*.<sup>2</sup> After the second definition Charmides agrees that *sophrosynē* is not only *kalon* (fine, praiseworthy) but also *agathon* (160e); and since this in regular usage included the notion of 'good for' a person or a purpose, he is easily tripped up. Homer's dictum was that 'modesty is not good for a poor man' (*Od.* 17.347, quoted also at *Laches* 201b).

*Third definition:* *sophrosynē* is 'minding one's own business', or more literally, 'doing one's own' (161b). Here the dialogue presents its first puzzle. Everyone knows that this is the final outcome of the search for justice, the highest virtue, in the *Republic*; namely that

<sup>1</sup> These passages are cited by Witte, *o.c.* 64, 25, 26, 71. For Critias on the Spartans see vol. III, 302. These observations ought perhaps to modify the remarks of Classen, *Sprachl. Deut.* 106.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Witte, *o.c.* 71f., though how far S.'s argument resembled the Sophistic is perhaps doubtful. W. (who dismisses the argument as an 'eristisches Kunststück', p. 68) refers to Aristotle, *SE* 165b7ff., but at least the second premise is always a true ἐνδοξον, not merely φαίνεται μὴ ὄν δέ. No ordinary person will deny that courage, *sophrosynē* or excellence in general (ἀρετή) is good and praiseworthy.

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justice is simply 'doing one's own', expanded into 'each one performing the one function in the community for which he is by his nature best suited' (433 a-b). Justice there is almost (p. 473 below) indistinguishable from *sophrosynē*, which for a community consists in agreement between governors and governed as to their respective roles, and for the individual in the harmonious blending of reason and the appetites, with reason as the ruling element (432 a, 442 c). Both alike are compared to concord in music (*sophrosynē* at 432 a, justice at 443 d), and at 443 d-e Plato actually says that the just man will become '*sophrōn*, unified and well-adjusted'. Even apart from our knowledge that for Plato, heir of Socrates, virtue was indivisible and consisted in knowledge of the good, these passages forbid us to build much on a distinction between *sophrosynē* and justice. Yet here Plato's own definition in the *Republic*<sup>1</sup> is not only summarily dismissed, but dismissed through a wilful reversal of its obvious meaning. In the *Republic* it meant that the shoemaker would stick to his last, the soldier concentrate on fighting and the ruler on government, none trying to meddle in the work of the others. Here, by sophistic shifts between doing and making, both contained in the same ambiguous Greek verb, Socrates claims that, far from the cobbler making shoes, and the tailor clothes, for all of us, to do – or make – one's own means that we should all weave, make and wash our own clothes and make everything else that we possess, an absurdity explicitly rejected by Plato at *Rep.* 369 e-371 b. Well may he say that anyone who equates *sophrosynē* with 'doing one's own' in *this* sense is either a fool or is speaking in riddles – but the only one to do so is himself.

The history and significance of the phrase 'to do one's own' are complex. Though Plato gave it fame as the climax of his discussion of justice, it was not his invention. In the *Timaeus* he calls it 'an old and a good saying that to do and to understand one's own and one's self belong to the *sophrōn* alone', combining the third and fourth definitions of the *Charmides* into something that he approves of himself.<sup>2</sup> The phrase occurs more than once in Lysias, e.g. where

<sup>1</sup> And cf. *Gorg.* 526 c, where it is the mark of the philosopher.

<sup>2</sup> *Tim.* 72 a. The context here is rather specialized. P.'s immediate point is that prophets acting under divine afflatus are not the right judges of their own utterances, which need interpretation by others who are sane and sound of mind.

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the accuser of one of the Thirty Tyrants (to whom Critias also belonged) says that no doubt he will describe himself as a decent, orderly character, not headstrong like some, but preferring 'to do his own'.<sup>1</sup> Its anti-democratic implications are obvious from the *Republic* itself, where Plato recommends it on the ground that it would be fatal to the community if an artisan or tradesman, emboldened by wealth, popular support or physical strength, should try to enter the class above him, or one of that (the military) caste aspire to the councils of government (434a-b). It was natural enough, therefore, for Socrates to suspect that Critias was the man from whom Charmides had heard it, whether or not his use of it was a historical fact.<sup>2</sup> After the *Republic*, maturer thought led Plato to point out in the *Politicus* (307d-e) that even doing one's own, or minding one's own business, can be carried to excess, inducing an indifference to one's fellows and to the welfare of the whole community, and in foreign relations to defeatism and a policy of peace at any price. This attitude, when it affects matters of high policy, Plato condemns in the strongest terms as the worst possible distemper in a state.

Plato knows very well that no one who equates *sophrosynē* with doing one's own means that we should all make our own clothes and oil-flasks. But the time has come for a new development in the conversation. Socrates has got all that could be expected from Charmides, and wishes to provoke Critias into taking part. This he does by a shameless distortion of the aphorism, which rouses its champion to an angry defence. Charmides, whose boyish innocence is unable to see through the trick, is only too ready to assist Socrates by not only confessing defeat but mischievously suggesting that perhaps his informant did not know what he was talking about, and the change-over is made with all desirable dramatic realism.

Thus the dialogue conforms to pattern in having a turning-point, marked by the surrender of the respondent and a fresh start on a new

<sup>1</sup> Lys. 26.3. The word σῶφρων is brought in a little later, at 26.5. See Classen, *Sprachl. Deut.* 100 and Witte, *o.c.* 43f., for the quotations.

<sup>2</sup> Many have thought Critias the originator of the phrase, and Diels-Kranz even include it among his fragments (41a). See Tigerstedt, *L. of S.* 537, Herter, *Festschr. Vretska* 84 n. 3 and Witte, *o.c.* 39 n. 85, for details. More probably it was a floating catch-phrase (cf. the εὖ καὶ πάλαι λέγεται of the *Tim.*), but one which would certainly be a favourite with Critias. See on this question Classen, *Sprachl. Deut.* 99-101 (with a rich selection of ancient quotations).



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level. This may follow either a positive suggestion from Socrates (*Euthyphro*, *Meno*) or a change of speaker (*Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*). But the change is never mechanical. For Plato philosophy can only be expressed as talk between real people reacting on each other, and so we have the byplay between the boy and his guardian, with Socrates as an amused spectator.

*Fourth definition:* 'the doing of good things' (163e). This is side-stepped rather than refuted by Socrates's question about knowledge. Critias shows by his remarks that he means 'actions befitting a gentleman', but the definition is still impossibly vague, and Critias abandons it almost immediately. Friedländer may have been right in not counting it as a separate definition at all (*Pl.* II, 72 and 309 n. 7).

*Criticism of Socratic method.* The next section contains the first explicit criticism of an essential part of Socrates's method, the argument from analogy. We are looking for the distinctive feature of *sophrosynē*, says Critias, but all you do is to assume that it must be the same as every other form of knowledge (165e). You are asking the wrong questions. It is a fair criticism, and it is accepted. Socrates can only answer 'True', and make his usual plea of ignorance. This is striking enough. It looks as if Plato is beginning to emerge from his Socratic shell and try his own wings. Warnings against relying on resemblances and ignoring differences occur more than once in his later works.<sup>1</sup>

*Fifth definition:* *sophrosynē* as self-knowledge. Critias agrees that a man cannot possess it without knowing that he does. (To deny this would be to deny what Socrates and Charmides agreed at 159a. It would also, as Friedländer pointed out (*Pl.* II, 72), overlook the (still living) etymological connexion of *sophrosynē* with a right state of mind.) In fact he is now ready to assert that the essence of *sophrosynē*

<sup>1</sup> E.g. *Phaedrus* 262b. The importance of this valid criticism of the Socratic method has been remarked on by a number of commentators, e.g. it is 'der erste treffende Kritik... die hier klar formuliert und ausgesprochen wird' (Leisegang, *RE* 2403); 'the objection of C., which we cannot help feeling to be justified' (Stenzel, *PMD* 36). But when Stenzel goes on: 'only the synoptic side of the later Dialectic, that is, only one half of it, has yet impressed itself on P.'s consciousness', one wonders how, in that case, he can already criticize it as inadequate. (Witte, *o.c.* 111, sees the matter rather differently.)

is in the Delphic precept 'Know thyself' (164d). It is, then, a form of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Thus Critias has presented Socrates with his own doctrine that virtue (or a virtue) is knowledge, and even more precisely that *sophrosynē* is self-knowledge, the doctrine of the first *Alcibiades*.<sup>2</sup>

Here however it leads to a tangle of difficulties of which the *Alcibiades* knows nothing. They arise from the sudden and surprising identification of knowledge of oneself with knowledge of *itself*, i.e. of knowledge, with the even more surprising rider that the knowledge which is its object is not simply that which *sophrosynē* has at first been said to consist of, namely a man's knowledge of himself, but must be understood universally, as knowledge of *all* knowledge. At 166c Critias says (and repeats it at 166e) that 'alone among forms of knowledge it is knowledge of itself and of other kinds of knowledge'. The identification, knowledge of *himself* = knowledge of *itself*, looks like a fallacy, and has often been branded as such,<sup>3</sup> but if we are to follow Plato in his efforts to make philosophic sense of Socratic ethics, we must accept that it is taken as natural by both Socrates and Critias, and hence presumably by Plato himself. It is seen most clearly at 169e, where Critias says: 'When a man has knowledge, he is knowing, and when he has knowledge whose object is itself, he will know himself.' 'I don't dispute it', replies Socrates.

Seen in the framework of the dialogue, the transition could well appear an inevitable consequence of statements already made. We

<sup>1</sup> The transition from γινώσκειν to ἐπιστήμη (often distinguished as representing 'connaître' and 'savoir' respectively), introduced by S. at 165c, is made much of by Tuckey (30f., 38). Reading on, however (see especially Critias at 169d-e), one must say with Witte (o.c. 109, comparing *Prot.* 352c and *Rep.* 476d-477d) that Plato regularly uses ἐπιστήμη simply as the substantive corresponding to the verb γινώσκειν. (At 169e γνώσις is treated as a synonym.) This does of course lead to ambiguity, since ἐπιστήμη has overtones both practical and theoretical which γινώσκειν lacks.

<sup>2</sup> *Alc. I*, 131b, 133c. See vol. III, 471f. Whether or not *Alc. I* is by Plato, I take it as a reliable source for Socratic teaching. For J. I. Beare (*Essays Ridgeway* 43f.) *Alc. I* must be earlier than *Charm.*, whereas for Friedlander (*Pl.* II, 80) it is later.

<sup>3</sup> Herter (*Festschr. Vretska* 76f. with notes) and Tuckey (32-6) refer to earlier critics who have so condemned it, Herter also (p. 77) to some who have seen nothing wrong. His own solution involves the full-blown theory of Forms: σάφροσύνη is a Form, the σάφρων an appearance (79f.), and ἐπιστήμη ἐαυτῆς in the realm of Forms corresponds to ἐαυτὸν γινώσκειν in the sensible world (81). On the next page, speaking of sight seeing itself, he even mentions the συμπλοκή εἰδῶν of the *Sophist*. I do not find this convincing, but as I have said (pp. 152f.), the gap between those who do not and those who do think it right to explain any and every dialogue in the light of P.'s mature and late work will probably never be bridged.

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must remember that it arose out of Critias's definition of *sophrosynē* as the doing of good and beneficial things. The sequence is then as follows:

1. *Sophrosynē* is the doing of good and beneficial things.
2. The doctor, ship's captain etc. do not, in virtue of their special skills, know whether the ultimate outcome of their professional acts will be beneficial or not (164b). (It may be better for a particular patient to die, or for a passenger not to be safely conveyed to his destination, where some awful fate may await him.)
3. But it is agreed that whoever is *sophrōn* must know that he is *sophrōn*, i.e. that what he is doing is good and beneficial.
4. This then is *sophrosynē*, knowledge of the doing of good and beneficial things.
5. Hence as a refinement on the earlier definition that it *is* the doing of good and beneficial things, we must say that it is knowledge of itself. The man who has it will of course know himself at least in this respect: that is, he will both be *sophrōn* and know that he is.<sup>1</sup>

Socrates adds that knowledge of knowledge must include knowledge of ignorance. Only its possessor can know what he knows and what he does not, and only he can detect what another person knows and what he does not know although he thinks he does. The echo of the *Apology* (21d) is unmistakable, and shows once again that, whatever the fate of the discussion, the ideal of *sophrosynē* is for Plato embodied in Socrates himself. But his questing mind cannot rest there. How was such a phenomenon as Socrates possible? What does it *mean* to speak of a knowledge of knowledge and ignorance? It has at any rate no likely parallel in other cognitive or emotional activities: we do not speak of hearing which hears itself, nor fear and desire which fear or desire themselves, and one may doubt whether in the natural world anything (e.g. heat or motion) can be the object of its own action (167c–168a). These however are large questions which Plato's Socrates feels himself incapable of answering decisively.

It is fascinating to see the first dawning in Plato's mind of problems

<sup>1</sup> S. might have put in, as he does elsewhere, the intermediate premise that it is by σωφροσύνη that a man is σώφρων (*Prot.* 332a–b οὐκοῦν σωφροσύνη σωφρονοῦσιν); but it is hardly necessary. Note also that the Greek idiom for 'does not know that he is σώφρων' is 'does not know himself, that he is σώφρων' (ἀγνοεῖ αὐτὸν ὅτι σωφρονεῖ, 164c).

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which assumed enormous importance later on. The 'great man' whom Socrates desiderated in this case (169a) turned out to be Aristotle, with his proof of the impossibility of self-action based on the doctrine of potentiality and actuality: what causes change or motion must be in actuality with respect to the change to be caused (what heats must be hot, to teach geometry one must have learned it, 'and in general what brings something about already possesses the form'), and what is acted upon must be only potentially in that state. Hence to speak of something being the object of its own action would involve the absurdity of saying that it is simultaneously in act and in potency with respect to the same act of change. This was a refinement on Plato himself, who in his maturity believed firmly in self-movement, identified with the life-force (*psyche*), as the source of all other, and this difference between the two thinkers determined the difference between their conceptions of deity.<sup>1</sup> No hint of these momentous consequences is present here, where he can only pass on with the remark that the conception of self-action is improbable though perhaps not impossible.

Some have doubted the wisdom of including the emotions here. One may surely speak of a fear of fear (i.e. of showing cowardice), and an ageing man may, unlike Sophocles, regret the passing of desire.<sup>2</sup> But the inaccuracy of citing these as instances of something acting on itself would have been pounced on by Aristotle as he showed up the looseness of talking about a doctor curing himself (*Phys.* 192b 24): in fact one thing (his mind with its medical knowledge) acts on another (his body). Similarly the desire which has desire for its object is different from its object, desire for a woman. Even if Plato could not formulate this as Aristotle did, some such awareness may have been in his mind. It is difficult to be sure.

Since neither of them can decide whether a knowledge of knowledge is possible, they pass to the question whether, were it possible, it would be of any use. In fact Socrates's way of proving its uselessness

<sup>1</sup> Ar. *Phys.* 8.5; Plato *Phaedrus* 245c, *Tim.* 89a, *Laws* 895e-896a. Cherniss (*ACPA* 435) thought it probable that P. already accepted the concept of self-motion in the *Charm.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Goethe's quatrain quoted in Tuckey, p. 45: 'Gib . . . die Macht der Liebe, gib meine Jugend mir zurück.'

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is to show that, as he himself first described it (ὁ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὑπετιθέμεθα, 171d), it is *not* possible. He had supposed it to be that gift of his own, of correctly estimating the extent and limitations both of his and of other people's knowledge – a faculty so valuable that the oracle had declared him to be, by virtue of it, wiser than all other men. But the possessor of knowledge whose only object is itself cannot, in virtue of that knowledge alone, accomplish this. He may, if he already knows e.g. geometry, find that his *sophrosynē* assists him in examining a claimant to the science, but by itself it is useless. The idea that one can recognize knowledge without knowing what it is the knowledge of – know *that* one knows without knowing *what* one knows (170c–d) – and recognize ignorance without knowing that it is ignorance of mathematics or what – is absurd, but this need not mean that we have failed to grasp what Plato is saying. In this dialogue he is facing and probing problems, not trying to solve them. When in the *Meno* Socrates by his accustomed method brings a boy to the knowledge of his own ignorance, the boy knows very well what it is that he is ignorant of, and is thereby assisted and made eager to know it. (See especially 84b–c.) But there his successive states of mind are explained by the doctrines of pre-existence and recollection, of which the *Charmides* is innocent.<sup>1</sup>

The description of *sophrosynē* as knowledge of knowledge *and the other 'knowledges'*, introduced by Critias from whom Socrates takes it over (though in his argument for its uselessness he keeps to the singular), is strange. It may be, as Tuckey suggested (p. 39), that Critias simply put it in unthinkingly to establish a verbal antithesis in the Sophistic manner.<sup>2</sup> In any case the argument shows that it cannot mean 'knowledge of the sciences' as commonly understood, but only the knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Others, like von Arnim, and in recent years notably Erbse, Untersteiner and Herter, have seen the *Charm.* as only explicable against a background of the doctrine of Forms (for Herter see p. 169 n. 3 above), and Witte also against that of P.'s 'esoteric philosophy' (o.c. 123, with reference to the work of Kramer and Gaiser). I attach no technical Platonic significance to the use of διαίρειν at 169a and 170a, regarding it as 'the simple Socratic sense of dialectic, still quite free from Platonic διαίρεσις'. (Stenzel, *RE* 2. Reihe, v. Halbb. 863. See also my vol. III, 204, 456.)

<sup>2</sup> It is surely important that it is Critias's definition, uttered at 166c and repeated by him at 166e. Only after that does S. take it over, at 167b–c. ('Sokrates' in Gauss's *Handkomm.* 1.2.101 line 3 is a serious mistake.)

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that (say) astronomy *is* a science, without any knowledge of its subject.<sup>1</sup>

*Sixth and final definition*: the knowledge of good and evil. If knowledge of knowledge and ignorance did mean what Socrates originally supposed, it might be expected to guarantee happiness in individuals and states, and one of the best things in the dialogue (or at least the most pertinent to the present day) is the vivid picture of a society run entirely by experts, in which no one is allowed to undertake a task dependent on technical training, from shoemaking or weaving to government, unless perfectly qualified, yet which lacks the one essential for happiness, a knowledge of ends as well as means. Through it Critias is made, by Socratic dialectic, to utter from his own lips Socrates's own conception of the knowledge which will ensure that we live well and happily: it is the knowledge by which we know good from evil, or in more Socratic and less biblical language, the truly beneficial from the useless or harmful. The preceding argument has forbidden them to call this *sophrosynē*, so the dialogue as a search for the essence of this virtue ends in failure, since it has led to the unacceptable conclusion that *sophrosynē* is no good. So did the *Laches*, on the different ground that courage (like the recipe for happiness here) appeared to consist in a knowledge of good and evil, but that would make it the whole of virtue instead of a part, including (we must note) *sophrosynē* (199d). The *Charmides*, like the other early definition-dialogues, drives home by its apparent failure the Socratic lesson that virtue is one, and consists in knowledge, knowledge of oneself and of what is, and what is not, good, useful or beneficial essentially and without exception. In this conviction Socrates had lived and died. He could never state positively that he possessed this knowledge, only exhort his friends to join him in the search as the most worth-while thing in life. (Cf. vol. III, 442 ff.) Plato was determined to discover it, but first he must draw out and understand the philosophical implications of Socrates's simple, practical ethic. The

<sup>1</sup> 170a6-8. I owe much to Tuckey's discussion of the *Charm.*, but find it difficult to agree that the use of the plural is meant by P. to indicate that 'knowing that one knows' is meaningless unless one knows what one knows (p. 64).

## Early Socratic dialogues

questions raised here about knowledge seem ambiguous if not bogus, and the most natural explanation is that Plato himself is in an early stage of wrestling with the difficulties that arise when one tries to understand the full implications of the Socratic belief that virtue is knowledge.

Finally, it is sometimes asked what, in modern terms, is this knowledge of knowledge that occupies so much of the dialogue? Is it 'theory of knowledge' or epistemology in our sense? (So Taylor, *PMW* 54.) The question is unanswerable because Plato has no single conception in mind: he is inquiring into it himself, and weighing one possibility against another. The question from which it arises certainly does not point to theory of knowledge. It is the question how a man can know that he is doing right, since only if he knows this will he possess *sophrosynē*. This reminds one of Aristotle's later insistence that the virtue of an act<sup>1</sup> consists not merely in the act itself but in the character of the doer: he must have acted not casually but 'knowingly, of deliberate choice, and steadfastly and unvaryingly' (*EN* 1105a28). And the last condition, for him as for Socrates, depended on the first. Yet as the discussion proceeds, Plato does seem to get interested in the idea of a knowledge of knowledge (or of the different 'knowledges') which should be a knowledge of the nature and preconditions of knowledge itself such as would constitute epistemology if that science had existed. We see the first stirrings of the intellectual curiosity which led him later on, in the *Theaetetus*<sup>2</sup> and *Sophist*, to look for the essence of knowledge itself, its relation to sensation and opinion, the possibility of error and related questions. He will found the study of epistemology, but not yet. Here, as Socrates demanded, we must return from these tempting byways to the search for the good life and the knowledge on which it depends. That is *sophrosynē*, which neither Plato nor any other Greek could equate with epistemology even if he knew of such a thing.

<sup>1</sup> That is, for it to be performed *δικαίως καὶ σωφρόνως*.

<sup>2</sup> At *Theaet.* 200b the notion of *τῶν ἐπιστημῶν καὶ ἀνεπιστημοσύνων ἐπιστῆμαι* recurs in the mouth of a notional contemptuous objector. The treatment of knowledge of knowledge and ignorance in the *Charm.* is put in its proper place by Campbell, *Theaet.* p. xxii: 'the problem is merely incidental and the treatment of it paradoxical and verbal'.

# The *Hippias Major*

## (7) THE HIPPIAS MAJOR

*Authenticity.* The genuineness of the *Hippias Major* (so called as the longer of two dialogues named after Hippias) was not doubted in antiquity, and it is included in the canon of Thrasyllus (pp. 39 ff. above). But since the beginning of the nineteenth century it has been alternately attacked and defended with equal vigour.<sup>1</sup> Many of the arguments used are of the subjective, 'unworthy-of-Plato' type. The author had no sure feeling for the style of the young Plato, says Gauss, and Hippias is represented as much too stupid. Dorothy Tarrant notes 'confusion and strangeness of language', and she and others choose to interpret coincidences of language or substance with other dialogues as imitation on the part of the unknown writer. (One thing one learns from reading Plato intensely enough to write about him is that he was an inveterate repeater of himself – even to the point of tedium.) A close verbal parallel in Aristotle (*Top.* 146a21) with *H. Maj.* 298a is dismissed by Tarrant as 'no sure indication that he knew the *H. Maj.*', whereas to Ross it was a clear allusion and to Grube an obvious borrowing.<sup>2</sup>

Sceptics differ as to the date of their imitation. Tarrant follows Wilamowitz in believing it to be the work of a young pupil of the Academy in Plato's lifetime, Pohlenz put it in the time of Aristotle, while Gigon and Gauss (who regard it with considerable contempt) deem it a product of the Hellenistic age.<sup>3</sup> Here it will be treated as

<sup>1</sup> For a convenient brief survey of the controversy up to 1953 see Soreth, *H. Maj.* 1–4. Her whole work is a powerful defence of its genuineness. Refs. for both sides are given by Friedl., *Pl.* II, 316f., n. 1 (1964) and Hoerber in *Phron.* 1964, 143. An adequate idea of the facts and fancies pro and contra will be gained by comparing the work of D. Tarrant, *H. Maj.* 1928 and *CQ* 1927 (contra) with that of Grube in *CQ* 1926 and *CP* 1929 (pro). Recent defenders of genuineness are R. Robinson, Crombie, Ryle and J. Malcolm. See Malcolm in *AGPh* 1968, 189 with n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Tarrant, *H. Maj.* p. x, Ross, *PTI* 3f., Grube, *CQ* 1926, 134f. and 147. Similarly Tarrant (xv) inferred from a parallel in Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.5 that the writer of *H. Maj.* knew the *Memorabilia*, whereas Taylor (*PMW* 29) thought Xenophon might have had in mind the opening remarks of the *Hippias*.

<sup>3</sup> Or in Gauss's more picturesque phrase, 'a Hellenistic cookshop of literary forgeries' (*Handk.* 1.2.208, where Gigon is quoted). For the young contemporary of Plato see Wilamowitz, *Pl.* II, 328f., Tarrant, *H. Maj.* xvi and lxx ('a young man in close touch with Plato – probably a student of the Academy'), *CQ* 1927, 87. One feels some surprise that a young man like this should write a *reductio ad absurdum* of the ontology of the *Phaedo* (Tarrant *ll.cc.*; cf. Grube, *CQ* 1926, 141), and still more that he did not even know Greek properly (*CQ* 1927, 84, on 286d).



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a work of Plato, but readers should know that it is not universally accepted as such. To be subjective in my turn, one of the most convincing touches is the entertaining device, quite in Plato's vein and scarcely imitable, whereby Socrates turns his own harsh criticisms of Hippias into objections brought by a mysterious personage against himself and so avoids any appearance of discourtesy on his own part. 'Who is this uneducated fellow who brings contemptible things like saucepans into a serious discussion?' asks Hippias with misplaced indignation (288d) – just the sort of remark that elsewhere is made against Socrates himself. (Cf. *Gorg.* 491a.) 'You wouldn't know him', says Socrates (290e), and at the end (304d) he is a close relation of his own and living in the same house. Another Socratic trait in this person is that when the search for a definition looks like failing he makes a positive suggestion himself (293d). When Hippias hopes that a weakness in the argument might escape him, Socrates replies that even so it would not escape the man in whose eyes he would feel most ashamed to be found wanting – namely himself. For a reader the game has been given away long before this, yet the reintroduction of the anonymous at the end, whatever some critics may say, is masterly. Socrates, we learn, admires the rhetoric of the Sophists and wishes he could emulate it, but when he praises it, this obstreperous *alter ego* is always tripping him up and abusing him.<sup>1</sup>

This and other judgements about the dialogue depend on the assumption that, in contrasting the character and method of Socrates with those of the only Sophist for whom he had no respect (vol. III, 281), Plato enjoyed himself by writing a little comedy. And whatever we think of its merits,<sup>2</sup> that is what it is, a burlesque of Hippias as an insensitive and stupid man with an impenetrable complacency and an insatiable appetite for flattery.

<sup>1</sup> Stallbaum was one who appreciated the device, calling it 'ratio . . . in qua explicanda miramur sane quod viri docti adeo se torserunt' (*Menex.* etc. 178).

<sup>2</sup> Grote in a censorious note (*Pl.* I, 364 n. a) found it 'misplaced and unbecoming', and compared it unfavourably with the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. He saw its origin in a historical quarrel between S. and Hippias reflected in their 'acrimonious controversy' in Xen. *Mem.* 4.4.5–25. Though that talk is not especially acrimonious, this is perhaps better than making P.'s Hippias a mask for his contemporaries Isocrates and Antisthenes, as some have done. (See Dümmler, *Akad.* 52 ff.)

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*Date.* This also has puzzled scholars, on the grounds that, whereas it bears all the marks of an early work, it nevertheless introduces conceptions generally attributed to a later period, notably the doctrine of Forms as it appears in the *Phaedo* or later.<sup>1</sup> Stylistic considerations show the same discrepancy. Friedländer noted that von Arnim's statistics put it between *Symposium* and *Phaedo*, 'yet in its structure it belongs not with these mature works, but with the group of aporetic dialogues'. It is with this group that it will be associated here, and its philosophical content will be discussed in its proper place.

*Dramatic date.* There is no precise indication. Since Hippias is already successful and famous, Jowett's editors (I, 561) suggest that the conversation cannot well be imagined as taking place before, say, 435. Taylor (*PMW* 29) remarked that his presence at Athens presupposes a time of peace, and since Gorgias's official visit (vol. III, 40) is in the past (282b), it must be after 427, and so during the peace of Nicias (421-416).

For *Hippias* himself see vol. III, 280-5.

Once more we are faced with an inquiry into the meaning and scope of a Greek word with a different coverage from any English one. It concerns 'the *kalon*', usually translated 'the beautiful' or 'beauty', which suggests that its subject is purely aesthetic, but in fact it is wider. Up to and including Plato's time, the word was applied not only to handsome men, beautiful women, eyes, ankles, dresses, buildings and so on, but also to a harbour or a camp, to omens, reputation and deeds. To arrive opportunely was to arrive 'in *kalos* time', and it sometimes was used with an infinitive. ('It is *kalon* for me to die.') Its adverb *kalōs* was always used in the non-sensual sense of well or rightly - living well, speaking well, faring well and so

<sup>1</sup> 'For the author of the *Hippias* the content of the *Meno*, *Phaedo* and *Symposium* was already firmly established' (Dummler, *Ak.* 61). The discrepancy has also been adduced as evidence of spuriousness. Thus Moreau writes (*REG* 1941, 41) that though the content is 'intégralement et adéquatement platonicien', it cannot be by P. because, although written in the Socratic genre, it refers to doctrines elaborated after his Socratic period and even after the middle dialogues. It is thus 'une œuvre d'école exécutée dans le style des premiers dialogues platoniciens'. But what a strange whim, to resuscitate P.'s early Socratic style after he had written not only *Phaedo*, *Symp.* and *Rep.* but also *Polit.*, *Phil.* and *Tim.*, in order to introduce ideas from all these works!

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forth – the rightness of the act being either technical or moral. Its relation to *agathon* was so close that to sum up their ideal of goodness and nobility the Greeks invented the compound noun *kalokagathia*, but it was a case of overlap, not synonymity: *agathon* had no aesthetic content, and always seems to have retained, even in such a general expression as ‘a good man’, something of the relative notion of good for some work or purpose, efficient, as conveyed in ‘a good carpenter’, ‘good at tennis’, ‘good with his hands’. *Kalon* commonly had an absolute sense,<sup>1</sup> though ‘*kalon* for this or that’ does occur occasionally even outside the pages of Plato.<sup>2</sup>

We too take ‘beautiful’ beyond the strictly aesthetic sphere, and speak of a beautiful character, a beautiful runner, or the beauty of holiness, but with a conscious implication that in addition to their moral or technical excellence they stir us in a way analogous to the effect of a landscape, a poem or a sonata. To say that someone is of good character or a good runner is not the same, and much of what Socrates says, and Hippias accepts, about what is *kalon*, would not be accepted by us as applying to beauty – and that not just because Hippias is stupid.<sup>3</sup>

### The Dialogue

#### (Direct dramatic form)

Socrates meets Hippias, revisiting Athens after a long absence<sup>4</sup> spent in diplomatic missions to various parts of Greece. S. eggs him on to boast of his achievement in keeping up a lucrative practice as a

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle saw this as the essential difference between the two. See *Metaph.* 1078a31 (vol. III, 170 n. 1), *EE* 1248b18, *Rhet.* 1390a1, *EN* 1207b28. P. would probably have agreed with him that καλόν was the wider term. That what is ἀγαθόν is καλόν he says more than once (*Tim.* 87c, *Lys.* 216d).

<sup>2</sup> Xenophon uses κάλλιστος τρέχειν (*Anab.* 4.8.26) and καλὸν ἐς στρατίαν (*Cyrop.* 3.3.6), and also, like P. at *H. Maj.* 295c, καλὸς πρὸς δρόμον and πρὸς πάλην (*Mem.* 3.8.4).

<sup>3</sup> For the alternative translation ‘fine’, which may sometimes be preferable to ‘beautiful’, see vol. III, 170.

<sup>4</sup> At *Mem.* 4.4.5 Xenophon speaks of H. meeting S. in Athens after a long time. Tarrant (*H. Maj.* xv) thinks ‘the author of *H. Maj.* knew Xen.’, Taylor (*PMW* 29) that the Xen. passage might have been suggested by the opening of *H. Maj.* The question is unanswerable, and it may as well be noticed now that there are many close parallels between Xen. and this dialogue. Cf. esp. *Mem.* 3.8.4 and *Symp.* 5 with 295c, *Mem.* 4.6.8–9 with 296d–e. Soreth (*H. Maj.* 18 n. 2, 48 n. 2) is particularly vehement against any suggestion that *H. Maj.* was the borrower. See also vol. III, 330.

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Sophist while engaging in multifarious public duties. How much wiser than the sages of old, who did not realize that the core of wisdom lay in making money! After some talk about his reception in Sparta, S. takes advantage of an invitation to hear him deliver a 'beautiful and well composed oration' on 'beautiful habits which a young man should acquire', to introduce the main topic. S. has a tiresome and importunate friend, who recently, when he was praising some features of a speech as beautiful and censuring others as ugly, asked him by what right he did this. Does he know what 'beautiful' is? How lucky that Hippias has come,<sup>1</sup> who in his superior wisdom will have no difficulty in telling S. what to answer. So S. obtains permission to speak and answer back in the person of this unpleasant character,<sup>2</sup> with a blunt rudeness which of course he would not dream of using himself.

First then, after listening to H.'s speech about 'beautiful' practices, the man would get him to agree that, as justice makes men just,<sup>3</sup> and wisdom wise, so beauty makes things beautiful; and all these qualities exist. But what is, what constitutes, beauty or 'the beautiful'? H. understands the question as 'What is beautiful?', not 'the beautiful', i.e. the attribute, and like so many of S.'s victims, names an example: 'A beautiful girl is beautiful.'<sup>4</sup> But so is a beautiful mare, or even a well-made cooking-pot, smooth and round and well-fired. H. reluctantly admits that the epithet could be applied to the pot, but not in comparison with the girl or other things called beautiful. This is a dangerous admission. Once introduce the notion of comparison, and we must admit that the girl is not beautiful in comparison with a goddess any more than the pot in comparison with the girl. Everything that we can name as beautiful will in some contexts be ugly, whereas

<sup>1</sup> εἰς καλὸν ἦκει (286d). So also εἰς καλὸν ὑπέμνησας a few lines earlier, and cf. σοὶ... οὐκ ἂν πρόποι in the discussion of beauty as τὸ πρόπον (291a). Such felicitous little word-plays accentuate the light and amusing character of the dialogue.

<sup>2</sup> At 287b, S. says that (literally translated) he will 'become the other man'. To H. this means 'play the part of', but in fact he had only to be himself.

<sup>3</sup> Literally 'just men are just by justice' etc. For the dative, see p. 118 n. 3 above.

<sup>4</sup> Lit. 'is a beautiful object', in the Greek idiom whereby the attributive adj. with a feminine noun is feminine, but the predicative one is neuter. (See Jowett,<sup>4</sup> 1, 563, for this and other difficulties in translating the various Greek expressions for beauty.) This makes H.'s error just a little less gross.

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'the beautiful in itself', which gives these individuals their beauty, cannot be anything but beautiful.

Beginning to catch the drift, H. suggests that 'that which, added to anything, makes it beautiful' is gold. Asked why, in that case, Phidias did not make Athena's statue all of gold, but parts of ivory and the eyeballs of stones, he replies that all these are beautiful, provided they suit their surroundings. In fact 'whatever is suitable (fitting, proper) for something makes that thing beautiful' (290d).<sup>1</sup> This gives S. the chance to make H. agree (only, of course, to protect himself against his vulgar relative, whom it would be most 'unfitting' for a great man like Hippias to talk to) that to stir beautiful soup in the admittedly beautiful pot a figwood spoon will be more beautiful than a gold one, which would tend to break the pot, wasting good soup and putting out the fire.

H. now has a new and brilliant idea which will silence the objector once and for all. The most beautiful, the finest thing for a man always and everywhere, which could never appear ugly to anyone, is to live to old age in wealth, health and honour, and at death to be given a splendid funeral by his children, having previously done the same for his parents. This answer meets with the same objection as those offered earlier, since for some heroes a glorious death in youth is more beautiful than survival to old age, which if tainted with cowardice would in fact be ugly and disgraceful.<sup>2</sup> Here we reach the standard turning-point in a Socratic dialogue (pp. 167f. above) – admission of defeat and a fresh start from a suggestion not made by the original respondent – though naturally as an artist Plato varies the literary form in every case. It is not H. – perish the thought! – who declares himself beaten. Given a few minutes quiet reflection, he would undoubtedly come up with the answer (295a). No, S. feels that he must confess defeat to his terrible relative, who however sometimes

<sup>1</sup> The word used (πρέπον), often best rendered by 'appropriate', could range from what befits a person or a class morally or prudentially ('mortal thoughts befit mortal men', 'as it befits slaves to speak', 'acts more fitting for barbarians than Greeks', 'his modesty befitted his youth' and so on) to the outwardly becoming, what 'suits' one in the way of clothes or personal adornments. H., his mind still bent on καλόν in the sense of outward beauty, takes it as the latter (294a).

<sup>2</sup> One is reminded of the moving passage in the *Apology*, 28b–d.

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takes pity on his ignorance and makes a suggestion of his own. In this case he would ask them to consider whether the proposition already made, that beauty consists in appropriateness, might not be the answer.

This however fails to survive S.'s question: Does what is fitting (or 'becoming') make things *appear* or actually *be* beautiful? H. at first thinks the former, since becoming and well-fitting clothes can make even a ludicrous figure look handsome, but when it is pointed out to him that this would make beauty a kind of deceit, he decides that it does both. In that case what has beauty must always be seen to be beautiful. But this is untrue. In fact laws and practices that are truly beautiful (fine, good: *kalon* covers all these) do not always seem so to everybody, but cause, through ignorance, more trouble and strife than anything else. Fittingness therefore must either be what makes things in fact beautiful, in which case it is the beauty we are looking for but not what makes them *appear* beautiful; or it is what makes them appear beautiful and so is not the beauty that we seek. Since H. decides it is the latter, they are foiled yet again.

S. now has a try in his own person. What if beauty consists in usefulness (τὸ χρήσιμον)? The word is used of eyes if they are useful to us for seeing, of a body in relation to its capacity for running or wrestling, of animals, vehicles, instruments, even laws and practices; everything is called *kalon* in so far as it is useful. Moreover usefulness depends on capacity or power, so power is fine and powerlessness ugly. This appeals strongly to H., for whom political power is the finest of all things, and lack of it ugly and shameful, but S. still has misgivings. Power and ability are neutral. Many have the power and skill to do bad things, and do them in error, through lack of wisdom. The 'usefulness and power' must be 'for good', or in a single word 'the beneficial' (τὸ ὠφέλιμον). But 'beneficial' means 'causing good', and a cause and its effect are not the same. So if beauty is the beneficial, it is not itself good, nor goodness beautiful.

H. would like to be left alone to think out the right answer, but S. cannot wait, and comes up at once with a new possibility. Beauty is what gives us pleasure – not all of it, but through hearing and sight. This would cover all natural and artistic objects of beauty, with

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music and literature, and possibly even laws and practices. Other pleasures, such as those of eating, drinking and sex, we can exclude on the ground that, though intensely pleasurable, no one would call them beautiful, and our new definition is: 'the beautiful is that part of the pleasurable that comes by sight and hearing'.

True to the Socratic pattern, this final effort must go the way of all the others. It is rejected by a rather complex and difficult argument, which runs like this.

What is pleasant through sight is not pleasant through hearing, and vice versa, but either is pleasant by itself and so are both together. What makes us single them out as beautiful cannot be the fact that they are pleasures, for the others are also pleasures. It must be some other quality which they share in common and other pleasures do not. It cannot be their visibility nor their audibility, for they do not share these in common. Nor can it be an attribute that belongs to both together but to neither separately. Here there is a digression because H. denies the possibility of such an attribute: if two men are just, each individually must be just. S. counters with a numerical example: a pair of individuals taken together are two, but each separately is not two but one. He then goes back to his main point. The attribute of being 'pleasures of hearing and sight', like that of duality, belongs to both together but not to each separately. It cannot therefore be what makes them beautiful, otherwise both together would be beautiful but not each by itself, whereas beauty, like justice, falls into the category of qualities which H. mentioned earlier as only belonging to two individuals together if each possesses it separately. If then we select the pleasures of sight and hearing as being beautiful, it cannot be *because* they come through sight and hearing. What then (the relentless questioner will repeat) makes them beautiful? S. can only suppose that, in contrast with eating or sex, they are the most *harmless* pleasures.<sup>1</sup> So, says the questioner, your new definition of beauty amounts to 'beneficial pleasure', but by re-introducing the word 'beneficial' it is subject to the same objection as the last.

<sup>1</sup> Pleasant scents also give harmless pleasure, and are for that reason included among 'true' pleasures in the much later *Philebus* (51b; cf. *Rep.* 584b). In the present sketch however they have been mentioned along with food and sex among the unbeautiful pleasures (299a).

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H. is disgusted with this logic-chopping, 'scrapings and shavings of argument'. He knows that what is really beautiful and worthwhile is the ability to make a fine and convincing speech in law-court or council-chamber. S. would be only too glad to believe him, but is perplexed by the prospect of going home to that odious relative who will only abuse him for claiming to recognize a beautiful speech when he does not even know what beauty is.

### *Comment*

The dialogue is yet another example of the Socratic method of searching for definitions with a partner, exercised now on the concept of beauty, and depicting at the same time an encounter between Socrates and a particularly conceited and vulnerable Sophist. To try to pick out one of these skilfully interwoven themes and make it the 'real subject' is to damage a considerable work of art.

The method follows the standard course. Hippias, like Euthyphro and Laches, is the 'expert' who can tell Socrates what he wants to know. He confuses mention of an instance with definition, is corrected, and a number of suggested definitions follow, some preceding and some following a proposal by Socrates himself, and approximating, some more some less, to the Socratic and Platonic concepts of the quality in question. Socrates's own answer is included and rejected only by a quibble, and at the end he is left outwardly lamenting their failure. Besides immortalizing his master's method, and showing him in one of his most mischievous moods, Plato is genuinely testing some ideas of what was essential to the Greek concept of beauty, embracing as it did both aesthetic and moral features. His later answer, that both beauty and goodness consist in a certain orderliness (*kosmos*), achieved through measure,<sup>1</sup> proportion, symmetry, as number is the secret of the beauty of musical harmony, is as yet wholly absent.

Hippias's initial confusion between instantiation and definition ('Look at a beautiful girl – *there's* beauty for you') is standard form, and is shown up both as too narrow (the argument *et alia*: mares and

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.* 284b τὸ μέτριον σώζουσαι (sc. αἱ τέχναι) πάντα ἀγαθὰ καὶ καλὰ ἀπεργάζονται; *Phil.* 64e μετρίότης γὰρ καὶ συμμετρία κάλλος δήπου καὶ ἀρετὴ πανταχοῦ συμβαίνει γίγνεσθαι; *Tim.* 87c πᾶν δὴ τὸ ἀγαθὸν καλόν, τὸ δὲ καλὸν οὐκ ἄμετρον.



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lyres can also be beautiful) and also by the argument *et idem non* (p. 132 above): a beautiful particular can also be seen as (relatively) ugly. This has been said to mark a departure from the other Socratic dialogues and betray the presence in the background of the mature Platonic ontology of *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Republic*,<sup>1</sup> in which particulars are contrasted with transcendent Forms; but it says no more than appears in the *Euthyphro* ('then the same things would be both pious and impious', 8a) and the *Laches* (192c ff.), where 'endurance' (offered as a definition of courage) is shown to be no more beautiful than ugly. Even Xenophon's Socrates says that the same things are both beautiful and ugly, which makes it pretty certain that Plato learned this from Socrates himself. (See Xen. *Mem.* 3.8.6-7.)

The second attempt (gold), ridiculous as it sounds, does show some understanding of the difference between 'what is beautiful' and 'what makes things beautiful', but is quickly shown to be not universally applicable and leads on to the *First definition* which satisfies the Socratic criterion of generality (290d): 'Whatever suits, or is appropriate to something makes it beautiful' (though in fact Hippias has not demonstrated its universality, i.e. that everything beautiful owes its beauty to suitability). The preliminary discussion of this provokes the genuinely Socratic observation, apropos of the golden and wooden spoons, that what serves its purpose best, and is most 'in place', is *ipso facto* both best and most beautiful.<sup>2</sup> For Socrates, 'appropriate' and 'useful' coincide. Here the incensed Hippias interrupts to lift the talk from soup-ladles to higher things. His attempt is of purely

<sup>1</sup> By Moreau in *REG* 1941, 27f., and independently by Malcolm, *AGPh* 1968, 191f. Moreau sees the whole doctrine, Malcolm 'a major step towards it'. With this argument, he says, P. 'is moving from logic to ontology'. Yet although he is explicitly contrasting *H. Maj.* with *Euthyphro* and *Laches* Malcolm does not mention the sentence at *Euth.* 8a. Nor does he mention *Laches* 192c, where it is certainly shown that 'endurance' (offered as a definition of courage) can be both beautiful and ugly (which courage cannot). This case differs in that endurance proves to be not too narrow but too wide a definition; but it should be taken into account. In *Euth.* and *Lach.* it is not (as it is in *H. Maj.*) comparison which shows particulars to have contrary qualities, but neither is it at *Phaedo* 74b or *Rep.* 479b, and at *Symp.* 210e-211a this is only one of a number of ways in which it is true.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. III, 388f., 462-4, esp. Xen. *Mem.* 3.8.4-7 on p. 464. Moreau (*l.c.* 30) thought that καλόν = πρέπον had an incontestably Platonic sound, and although the only other occurrence he can quote is in *Alc. I* (135b), he is probably right; or rather it is Socratic, adopted by P.

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*ad hominem* significance, to indicate the Sophistic idea of a perfect life, and is quickly disposed of by the *et idem non* argument, and return is made to 'the appropriate' by way of a positive proposal attributed to the anonymous objector. It is finally dismissed by an argument using the distinction between reality and appearance.<sup>1</sup> This is a very curious argument, for it would apply not only to appropriateness but to whatever else might be alleged to be a definition or description of beauty. Does the appropriate make things to *be* beautiful or only to *appear* so? It cannot do both, for otherwise everything that possesses that attribute (i.e. if appropriateness = beauty, everything that is beautiful) would both be and appear beautiful, and there would be no difference of opinion about what is beautiful. If then it makes things genuinely beautiful, it is what we are looking for but is not what makes them appear beautiful; if on the other hand it is what makes them appear, without being, beautiful, it cannot be beauty, for that is what makes them *be* beautiful. Hippias thinks it is the latter, so once again the search has failed.<sup>2</sup>

Substitute 'x' for 'the appropriate', and the argument will be equally valid for any value of x. It is one of the commonest forms of Sophistic argument, the 'either-or' dilemma, allowing no middle way between two extremes (p. 148 above). The *Euthydemus* is full of examples, and we cannot suppose that Plato did not know what he was doing when in this racy little work he shows Socrates turning the tables and inflicting it on a Sophist himself. Presumably therefore he was aware that it disqualified not only 'the appropriate' but anything else one could think of, from consideration as a definition of beauty. The true situation, as Plato sees it, emerges clearly enough: there are beautiful, or fine things (e.g. laws and customs) which some recognize as beautiful and some do not. There is a distinction between reality and appearance, and beauty is what makes things *genuinely*

<sup>1</sup> (294a-e). Moreau (*l.c.* 31f.) claimed that the distinction as here employed presupposed a background of the whole Platonic ontology, even ('pour qui connaît') the line simile of *Rep.* 6. In fact it goes no further than passages like Eur. fr. 698 (*ap. Ar. Ach.* 441) εἶναι μὲν ὅσπερ εἰμὶ, φαίνεσθαι δὲ μὴ, or Xen. *Mem.* 1.7.3 and 4 (μὴ ὧν φαίνεσθαι and μὴ ὄντα δοκεῖν). P. did not invent the distinction between appearance and reality.

<sup>2</sup> The first alternative is not explicitly refuted, presumably because the idea that the beauty of things should *never* make them appear beautiful bears its absurdity on its face.

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beautiful (294b, 'beauty, which makes all things beautiful, whether they appear so or not'). The reason why some do not recognize their essential beauty is ignorance. 'There is ignorance about them, and contention and strife over them between both individuals and states' (294d).

*Second general definition* (295c): Whatever is useful is beautiful. Suggested by Socrates, whose genuine belief we know it to have been. Usually he, like most people, would confine it to 'useful for good ends' and so equivalent to 'beneficial'.<sup>1</sup> Here however he equates it with power and emphasizes its neutrality, to make to Hippias the power-lover the point which he makes at length to Polus in the *Gorgias* (466b ff., esp. 470a),<sup>2</sup> that power is not necessarily a blessing: it depends how it is used. To remove ambiguity, the *Third definition* must be substituted (296e): the beautiful is the beneficial. This puts the true Socratic and Platonic position even more precisely,<sup>3</sup> and is only defeated by another barefaced sophism: cause and effect are not the same, the beneficial is the cause of good, therefore the beneficial is not good. This is to argue that if the two concepts, beauty and goodness, are not identical, beauty cannot have the attribute 'good'.<sup>4</sup> Aristotle would have said that it not only may, but in this case must have it, according to his doctrine that what causes or generates something else must be formally identical with its product: only what is hot can generate heat, only a man can beget a man (*Phys.* 257b9, 202a11).

We notice Socrates's habit of taking account, in passing, of his own beliefs, even when his auditor is not one to appreciate them.

<sup>1</sup> As at *Gorg.* 474d-e, where he slips from χρεῖα to ὠφελία, and Xen. *Mem.* 4.6.8-10, where Marchant in the Loeb ed. translates both χρήσιμον and ὠφελιμον as 'useful'.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Friedlander, *Pl.* II, 111: 'Through the delight expressed by the Sophist [at the suggestion that beauty might be power], we begin to see the basic problem of the *Gorgias* taking shape in the distance.' I agree with F. that *H. Maj.* is the earlier version.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Rep.* 457b κάλλιστα γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο καὶ λεγέτω καὶ λελέγεται, ὅτι τὸ μὲν ὠφελιμον καλὸν τὸ δὲ βλαβερὸν αἰσχροῦν.

<sup>4</sup> The point has been well expressed by Hoerber, *Phron.* 1964, 154. When S. is speaking seriously he of course ignores this sophism. Thus at *Gorg.* 499d he says that good pleasures are the beneficial, and that means those which effect something good. Moreau (*l.c.* 34) thought this passage 'literally dependent' on *Phil.* 26e-27a. There the distinction between cause and effect is repeated, but this does not prevent Plato from equating ἀγαθὸν with καλὸν at 64e.

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(Cf. p. 123 above.) Thus people who abuse power 'err involuntarily' (296c5), for he cannot have it that anyone does wrong willingly, and wisdom is singled out among other fine things as finest of all and a 'begetter of the good' (296a, 297b).

*Fourth definition:* 'Beauty is pleasure that comes through hearing and sight' (298a).<sup>1</sup> This, as Friedländer says, 'designates another important domain of the beautiful', but why should Socrates do this when, here as in the other dialogues, he has been trying to hammer home the lesson that a definition must cover the whole concept, and not one of its 'domains', however important? Only, one must suppose, because he is enjoying playing cat and mouse with a conventionally minded Sophist who will never detect such tricky play. He does indeed make it clear that he has not confused individual instance with universal essence, that their goal is not the pleasures themselves but the common property that makes them beautiful (300a), but he has still confined beauty to the sensuous realm and excluded, for example, the beauty of thought, mentioned at 297b. This however is not the ground on which they are rejected, which is simply a reference back to the faulty argument against the beneficial.<sup>2</sup> We need not look here for a serious treatment of the nature of pleasure or its relation to goodness. There will be plenty of other discussions of that, in *Protagoras*, *Gorgias*, *Republic* (especially book 9) and finally and most fully *Philebus*. In early dialogues such as (to state a personal view) this one, Plato is even more interested in depicting the encounters of Socrates with a variety of friends or opponents than in the single-minded pursuit of a subject to its conclusion. For that, his Socrates had to undergo a transformation. He makes his points by the way, such as the little logical one about numerical properties, which belong to a group as a whole but not to each separate member of it (301d-e). To notice this was typical of Plato, and shows already that interest

<sup>1</sup> In the *Phaedo* (65b) these are the most 'accurate' of the senses, and in the poetic passage in *Rep.* (401c) about the importance of beauty in the upbringing of children, the influence of fine works upon eye and ear is singled out. This, as P. says here, is only natural.

<sup>2</sup> In equating harmless with beneficial (as Grube pointed out, *Monist* 1927, 279) P. confuses contrary and contradictory, as he also does elsewhere in early dialogues.

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in the peculiarities of number which played such a large part in his later thought.<sup>1</sup>

*The Hippias Major and the Forms.* Some see no trace here of the developed Platonic doctrine of Forms,<sup>2</sup> others find it so fully expressed as to afford proof that the dialogue is later than *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*. For Stallbaum in the 1850s its character as a youthful work was confirmed by the absence of any trace of the doctrine, and Grube in 1927 wrote: 'It is important to note that in neither [*H. Maj.* or *Gorgias*] does he make any use of the theory of ideas. Not a single expression...need imply that Beauty has any existence of its own apart from the particular objects in which it appears. Not so in the *Republic*...' <sup>3</sup> Yet according to Leisegang the assumption of the *Hippias* that 'it is by the beautiful that beautiful things are beautiful' is only comprehensible in the light of the developed theory. He does not mention that a similar phrase occurs in the *Euthyphro* (6d).<sup>4</sup> There is a third class of those who think it is 'transitional' and 'foreshadows' the great middle period.<sup>5</sup> The position of Tarrant and Friedländer is peculiar. Tarrant believed it to have been written (not by Plato) after *Republic* and *Phaedo* (p. lxxv). The 'theory of Ideas' is already established, yet there is 'no trace of the characteristic παράδειγμα- [pattern-] view... The only conception of the relationship found here is... a doctrine of immanence... Thus the *Hippias Major* excludes the more characteristic aspect of the theory of Ideas' (p. lx). Friedländer is somewhat non-committal, but might agree to the 'transitional' view. 'The direction towards the central area of Plato's thought is unmistakable.' We 'catch sight of' Diotima's way of love, and 'we cannot fail to see what the term

<sup>1</sup> See Crombie, *EPD* I, 21, II, 447, 474; Ross, *PTI* 17 with Malcolm's criticism in *AGPh* 1968, 198 n. 3. I do not follow Ross in seeing here evidence of an interest in 'Ideas of number' (with capital I) nor of 'a further development in the theory of Ideas than anything to be found in the *Laches* or the *Euthyphro*'. A careful reading of the passage reveals no trace of 'Ideas'.

<sup>2</sup> For which see the provisional account in connexion with *Euthyphro*, pp. 116-18 above.

<sup>3</sup> Stallbaum, *Menex.* etc. 178f.; Grube, *Monist* 1927, 272.

<sup>4</sup> Leisegang in *RE* 2384f., comparing 287c with *Phaedo* 100d. For *Euth.* 6d see pp. 118f. above. To Soreth on the other hand (*H. Maj.* 44) parts of *Phaedo* describing the Ideas appear as *corrections* of *H. Maj.*

<sup>5</sup> So most recently Malcolm in *AGPh* 1968. But see p. 184 n. 1 above.

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*Eidos* is aiming at'. 'Yet', he continues, 'it is not in the spirit of Plato to distinguish between the "logical concept" and the "theory of *Ideas*" and to speculate whether Plato is "still" using the term in the former sense and has "not yet" progressed to the latter' (*Pl.* 11, 109 and 108). One would have thought that for a student of Plato's mind it was of some importance to know whether he held a mere 'Begriffsphilosophie' (the word in Friedländer's original) or had evolved a belief in the objects of knowledge as transcendent beings, knowledge of which entails the immortality of our minds and the alternation of incarnations with periods of extra-corporeal existence.

The following passages are relevant:

287c-d. Things are just 'by justice' and beautiful 'by the beautiful'; and justice and beauty both exist. The language is, as is often pointed out, identical with that of *Phaedo* 100d, but it is also precisely parallel to *Euthyphro* 6d. For the existence of a virtue or quality (readily accepted by Hippias as by Protagoras) see p. 115 and for the dative p. 118 n. 3. 288a ('If the beautiful itself is *what*, will all beautiful things be beautiful?') puts the same point in different words: the existence of beauty is a condition of things being beautiful. 'The beautiful itself' recurs, e.g. at 289c and d, just as 'the form itself' in the *Euthyphro*.<sup>1</sup>

289d. 'The beautiful itself by which all other things are adorned and appear beautiful, whenever that form is added to it.'<sup>2</sup> We have already seen that the 'presence' (παρουσία) of a quality in an object is a natural expression which need have no philosophical overtones (p. 151). 'Addition' (προσγίγνεσθαι) might seem to go further, suggesting what Miss Tarrant called a 'visiting' form, with an existence outside as well as in the object. Later, however, she took it together with *Euthy.* 301a, and the *parusia* passages in the *Lysis* and *Gorg.* 497e, in none of which 'is it likely that the theory of Ideas is in any

<sup>1</sup> And 'justice itself' (αὐτὸ τὸ δίκαιον) outside Plato altogether, in Isocrates. See *Antid.* 130, to which my attention was drawn by Professor G. E. L. Owen.

<sup>2</sup> So also at 292d, and at 293e-294a the appropriate 'comes to be present' (παρεγόμενον).

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sense implied'. Why then in the *Hippias*? The *Euthydemus* shows that Plato used the two verbs indifferently.<sup>1</sup>

292c. 'I asked you for the beautiful itself (τὸ καλὸν αὐτό)... I am asking you what beauty (κάλλος) itself is.' Here, as in the *Euthyphro*, Plato uses the adjectival and substantival forms indifferently, happily unaware of the difficulties to which this would finally lead (p. 119 above).

293e. (Literally) 'This very thing "the appropriate" and the nature of the appropriate itself – consider whether this is the beautiful.'

Comparison with the *Euthyphro* (pp. 114ff. above) shows that there is nothing in the language of the *Hippias* which goes beyond it, or need cause us to assume a later stage in Plato's philosophical development. When the forms in these dialogues have so much in common with those of the later (beauty is an existing thing, it is called 'the beautiful itself', it is that 'by which' particulars are beautiful, it is, or becomes, 'present' in them, it is called *eidos*, it never admits its opposite), it may seem like stubborn thesis-defending to say that they are different simply because the language here does not also suggest that they exist outside and beyond the particulars. Might this not be accidental? No, because the addition of transcendence is not a trivial but a revolutionary development<sup>2</sup> which inevitably alters the whole feeling and direction of a dialogue in a manner of which any sensitive reader must be aware. Bound up as it was with the immortality of the knowing subject, it made the Forms a suitable topic for discussion at Socrates's deathbed, it led in the *Phaedrus* to talk of a 'place above the heavens' where the winged soul enjoyed the society of the gods in contemplation of eternal verities, and in the *Symposium* to the consummation of love in a spiritual vision of the bodiless essence of beauty. I do not understand how scholars have supposed that after scaling these heights Plato could have returned to write this light-

<sup>1</sup> In spite of her note in *H. Maj.* (p. 52), Tarrant's examples in *CQ* 1927, p. 86, show her making no distinction in P.'s usage between παρῆναι and παρὰ (or προσ) γίνεσθαι, and this is surely right. At *Euthyd.* 301a S. says that beauty is present (πάρεστιν) in beautiful things, and the Sophist Dionysodorus asks him whether, if an ox 'comes into his presence' (παράγνηται), he is an ox (p. 278 below).

<sup>2</sup> I do not mean that it seemed so to P., and should perhaps say 'revolution-making' in T. S. Kuhn's sense. See vol. III, 352.

## *The Hippias Minor*

hearted piece of dialectical entertainment and Socratic Sophist-baiting. Nor could a pupil have had any conceivable motive for doing so.

To learn his deepest thoughts about beauty we must wait for the central dialogues and the later *Philebus*, when he has achieved the great synthesis of Socratic and Pythagorean philosophy which is Platonism. It is in the *Philebus* that specific points from the *Hippias* are taken up most obviously. Such are: the reason for singling out the pleasures of sight and hearing (51a-b), the points that wisdom and good sense are always beautiful, never ugly, whereas some pleasures are not fit to be witnessed (65e-66a, cf. *H. Maj.* 296a, 297b, 299a) and that cause is different from effect (26e-27a). But whereas at 297c this last assertion is used to trick Hippias into agreeing that the beautiful is not good nor the good beautiful, in the *Philebus* we read that 'the good has taken refuge in the character of the beautiful'. Both are united in the Pythagorean qualities of measure and proportion (*Phil.* 64e).

### (8) THE HIPPIAS MINOR

*Authenticity and date.* Though some nineteenth-century critics doubted it on moral grounds (Apelt called it 'a kind of apologia for sin', and spoke of its 'reversal of all moral ideas'),<sup>1</sup> it is now widely accepted that Aristotle's reference to it by name is a guarantee of Platonic authorship.<sup>2</sup> It is also almost universally thought to be either the earliest, or among the earliest, of Plato's dialogues.<sup>3</sup> Wilamowitz,

<sup>1</sup> For the bearing of such considerations on the authorship cf. Grote 1, 388: 'These critics cannot bear to admit any Platonic work as genuine unless it affords them ground for superlative admiration and glorification of the author.' Tarrant (*H. Maj.* 31f.) rejected it because 'the character of H. is tame and indefinite in comparison with *H. Maj.*' and 'the style and vocabulary are undistinguished'. Contrast Taylor, *PMW* 35: 'much more brilliantly executed than the *H. Maj.*'

<sup>2</sup> At *Metaph.* 1025a6, Arist. criticizes 'the argument in the *H.* that the same man is both true and false'. He does not mention Plato, but on this see Grote and Taylor *ll.cc.*

<sup>3</sup> Von Arnim is unusual in putting it after *Gorg.* and *Meno.* (See Ross's table, *PTI* 2.) More typical opinions are: 'a first attempt' (Zeller 2.1.479), 'une témérité de jeunesse... un des premiers essais' (Croiset, Budé ed. 20-1), 'Plato... adolescens' (Stallbaum, *Menex.* etc. 274), 'le premier en date peut-être des écrits platoniciens' (Moreau, *REG* 1941, 41).

One troublesome point is usually ignored, namely an obvious reference from one dialogue to the other. At *H. Maj.* 286b, H. invites S. to an *epideixis* on Homer which he is soon to give at the request of one Eudicus. At the beginning of *H. Min.* he has just given it, and Eudicus asks S. what he thinks of it. To Wilamowitz this was no problem: *H. Maj.* was spurious, and



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Ritter and Friedländer put it before the death of Socrates, because they could not believe it possible that after it Plato would depict him in such an unfavourable light.

### The dialogue

#### (Direct dramatic form)

Hippias has just delivered an eloquent disquisition on Homer, and most of the audience have left. Eudicus, the promoter of the event (*H. Maj.* 286b; he is otherwise unknown), asks Socrates what he thought of it, but S. prefers to ask a question. Which is the better man, Achilles or Odysseus, and in what respect? H. replies that Homer made Achilles the best of all the Greeks who went to Troy, Nestor the wisest, and Odysseus the most cunning.<sup>1</sup> But was not Achilles cunning? No, he was truthful and simple, and Odysseus cunning and false. Then cunning is the same as false, and Homer meant that the truthful man is different from the false. Does H. think so too? Of course. Then we can leave Homer out of it, since we cannot ask him what was in his mind.<sup>2</sup>

Having cleared the ground and brought H. to face him in his own person, S. proceeds to investigate the relation between a truthful man and a liar, with assent from H. at each step. Liars are *capable* (δυνατοί). Their deceit is the result of roguery and a certain *understanding* (φρόνησις). They know (ἐπίστανται) what they are doing and so are *wise* – at least in deceit. An incapable and stupid man could not deceive. ‘Capable’ means doing what you want when you want to.

Now H. is outstanding at arithmetic. He could give the right

its author had borrowed the *epideixis* motif to bolster up his forgery. If both are genuine, the natural conclusion is that P. wrote the *Major* first. There is nothing impossible in this. (Gauss 1.2.199 puts the *Minor* towards the end of his early period.) It is tempting to agree with Soreth (*H. Maj.* 12 n. 1) or Flashar (*Ion* 36 n. 1) that no allusion is necessarily intended, but I cannot do so. When Soreth says that according to *H. Min.* 363a6–b4 the subject of H.’s discourse has been the question whether the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* is the better poem, this is simply untrue.

<sup>1</sup> πολυτροπώτατος, ‘of many ways’, taken from the first line of the *Odyssey*. In use it shaded from ‘versatile’ to a pejorative sense of ‘wily’, ‘deceitful’, as here.

<sup>2</sup> This is a favourite technique of S. for getting a victim into his net. At *Prot.* 347e he rejects discussion of the opinions of poets on the ground that they cannot answer questions, and at *Meno* 71d, where a view of Gorgias has been mentioned, he gets M. to admit that he agrees with it, and goes on: ‘Then let’s leave him out, since he isn’t here, and tell me what *you* think.’

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answer to a sum straight off, because in this respect he is most capable, wisest and best. But *for the same reason* he could, if he wished, give the wrong answer, whereas an ignoramus, wishing to lie, might by mistake give the right one. Thus the same man, namely the good arithmetician, is the most capable of both truth and falsehood in his own subject. The good man, who is the capable and the truthful one, is also the false one. They are not contraries, but identical. This applies equally to every branch of knowledge or practical skill. H. should know, as he is an expert in more arts than anyone living, and he cannot mention any art in which the truthful man and the liar are not the same, namely the expert in that art. Consequently he must admit that if Achilles is truthful and Odysseus false, they are not antithetic but similar.

H. not unnaturally objects to this conclusion, and accuses S. of always tying an argument in knots, quibbling over details instead of taking the whole subject as the ground for their contest. He could expound the difference at length, with plenty of evidence, and S. could then, if he wished, make a counter-speech, and the others would judge between them.<sup>1</sup> But this is not S.'s way. When he thinks someone wise, he questions him and examines his words, in order to learn from him. Now in the passage from the *Iliad* quoted by H. (9.308ff.), was it not Achilles who was untruthful, saying he was going home to Phthia when he had no intention of doing so? Nor was it simply (as H. claims) that he stayed out of consideration for the army: the lie was deliberate, for a little later (vv. 650ff.) he tells Ajax quite a different story. This, says H., was simply out of the goodness of his heart, whereas Odysseus, whether he spoke truth or lies, always acted from a deliberate plan.

Then Odysseus was the better man, for we agreed that voluntary liars were better than involuntary. H. is duly shocked. How could those who intentionally commit wicked acts be better than those who do them through ignorance? The latter deserve pardon, as the law recognizes. S. is profuse in his apologies: he knows nothing, is

<sup>1</sup> H. uses the same word (ἀγωνίζεσθαι) as in describing his Olympic contests. For a Sophist arguments were competitive (vol. III, 43), and normally proceeded by speech and counter-speech as H. here suggests. For better or worse, the Socratic method is a complete contrast.

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only anxious to learn, is not wise like H. and so on. Of course it's just his stupidity, but it seems to him that those who harm others, act wickedly, lie and err voluntarily are better than those who do so involuntarily. He doesn't always think so – is all at sea in his ignorance – but just now he has one of his attacks and H. must cure him. Let Eudicus plead for him. E. thinks there is no need, and H. replies that he is willing to answer questions, only S. is always causing confusion, as if maliciously. S. avows that he does not do it intentionally, so H. ought on his own showing to forgive him, and H. agrees to go on answering his questions for Eudicus's sake.

Well, a runner who purposely runs slowly is a *better* runner than one who cannot help it, and so with wrestling, and (as H. agrees) what they do in a race or wrestling-match is not only bad (κακόν) but disgraceful (αἰσχρόν). So it is with ungraceful movements, singing out of tune, limping and the use of our organs of sensation; and again with artefacts (better a rudder or a bow with which one can perform badly if one wishes to, than one which makes one do so), or living creatures (like horses to ride). With people as a whole, an archer who purposely shoots badly, or a doctor who purposely harms his patient is better (at archery or medicine) than one who does so because he cannot help it. So far H. cannot but agree, but in fact S. has put his points in the (especially in English) rather unnatural form of 'the *psyche* (soul, mind) of an archer who purposely misses the mark is better at archery'. He then goes on: 'Then will not our own soul be better if it does wrong and errs voluntarily than if involuntarily?' H. rebels again: it would be monstrous to say that voluntary wrongdoers are better than the involuntary. S. thinks it follows from the argument, but H. flatly denies it, so S. tries a different approach.

Justice (righteousness, morally right action) must be either a power, or knowledge, or both. If power, the more capable soul is the juster, for the more capable was shown to be the better; if knowledge, the wiser soul (more knowledgeable or accomplished; *sophos*) is the juster; if both, the soul which has both power and knowledge. But the more capable and knowledgeable was seen, in every occupation, to be the better, and better able to do both fine and shameful deeds

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And when it acts shamefully, it does so voluntarily through power and skill, which are elements of justice – either one or both of them. Therefore the more powerful and better soul, when it acts wickedly, does so willingly, and the bad (πονηρά) soul unwillingly. So the man who willingly does disgraceful and wicked actions, *if there be such a man*, is no other than the good man. H. cannot accept this. Neither can I, says S. candidly, but it seems to be the conclusion of the argument. I am all at sea, as any plain man must be, and if you wise men cannot help, our position is hopeless.

### *Comment*<sup>1</sup>

To read through this little dialogue without a growing sense of irritation at its manifest absurdities calls for a strong historical imagination. It is not easy to project oneself back into the ruthless infancy of dialectics and the agonistic atmosphere of a sophistic encounter, nor to understand the acceptance of obvious fallacies in the days before there had been any serious study of the rules of reasoning. The nearest parallel is the *Euthydemus*, and Socrates sometimes comes perilously near the logical clowning of the two Sophists parodied there. He plays on ambiguities all the way through, especially on 'good' (*agathos*) as good *at* a technical accomplishment and as morally good<sup>2</sup> (and consequently on 'bad' (*kakon*) both as the contrary of the first sense and as disgraceful or wicked), and in discussing voluntary action confuses 'able and willing' with 'able' alone. He treats as absolute contraries what are matters of degree only, and he converts the inconvertible. (See 375d and 376a: if justice is power and knowledge, power and knowledge are said to be elements in justice and treated as if they could not exist also outside justice.)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the wide variety of past views on the dialogue see Schneidewin, *P.'s zweite Hippiasd.* 18–24, and O'Brien, *SP* (1967), 99 n. 11.

<sup>2</sup> I doubt if this can be defended on the lines suggested by O'Brien (*SP* 100 n.), that it is not an equivocation if we grant the Socratic paradox that virtue is knowledge. According to that doctrine, to know the good is inevitably to do it, whereas here the overt argument requires that the man with the knowledge and ability which is justice will sometimes choose to do wrong.

<sup>3</sup> One might ask anyway why H. should agree at once that justice must be 'either a power or knowledge or both'. Can it really be supposed to follow from his previous admission that no action can be performed unless one has the power and skill to perform it, justice being seen as a form of action?

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Never does either speaker mention that although the good man is *capable* of using his powers to wrong ends as well as right, he will not *choose* to do so; and if, having the ability to do both good and evil, he chooses to act wickedly, he is no longer good. Thus at 367c, because the expert arithmetician is most capable of lying about sums, therefore he *is* a falsifier of sums. That the mendacious must have the same capability as the truthful is correct: to lie successfully he must know what is true on the subject. But that liar and truthful are the same man is not true, because the one will not lie although he could. This point was made already by Aristotle, at *Metaph.* 1025a2–8<sup>1</sup> and more succinctly at *EN* 1127b14: ‘Deceit does not lie in the ability, but in the choice.’ At 375d ff. it is the just man who is described as having ability and knowledge (*dikaios*, not simply *agathos*, which might sophistically still retain its technical sense). In this case therefore, even if the argument is narrowly understood, it would not transgress it to say that, since obviously others besides the *dikaios* have ability and knowledge, if a man uses them for wicked ends he is not *dikaios*.<sup>2</sup>

Shall we then conclude, with Wilamowitz (*Pl.* 1, 139), that we have here an exquisitely humorous little work with no moral content but the sole purpose of satirizing Hippias? Or with Ovink (*M. u. H. Min.* 176f.) that there is no conscious dialectical virtuosity, but Plato is the dupe of his own abstractions, finding the conclusions at present unavoidable, though with an obscure suspicion that something is wrong somewhere? Perhaps (Leisegang, *RE* 2382) Plato himself is criticizing Socratic thought as incapable of understanding the ethical concepts with which it was concerned. Less negatively, Socrates is said to be teaching that education should aim at imparting, not any kind of knowledge and skill such as the Sophists offered, but moral perfection (Ritter, *Essence* 38). In that case he is presumably arguing on Sophistic premises to show that they lead to immoral conclusions which a Sophist himself cannot accept. H. Maier (*Sokr.* 351 ff.) even

<sup>1</sup> He adds that the analogy of lameness (374c) is false because by ‘willingly lame’ P. means only *imitating* lameness. If a man really became lame through voluntary action (contracting gout, say, through a fondness for port), he would be worse, not better, than the man whose lameness was unavoidable. For modern literature on this passage see Neuhausen, *De volunt.* not. 47 n. 44.

<sup>2</sup> See further on the fallacies Sprague, *PUF* ch. 4, and Ovink, *Meno u. H. Min.* 177 ff.

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detected a 'moral dialectic' aimed at leading up to the Platonic knowledge of the Good.

Since this, if any, has the air of a purely Socratic dialogue, it may be helpful to consider what Socrates himself believed. Xenophon also shows him putting forward the immoral thesis which so shocked Apelt and others, that the intentional sinner is a juster man than the unintentional, and supporting it by the dubious analogy of non-moral knowledge (*Mem.* 4.2.20). The initial premise is (as at *H. Min.* 375 e) that there is a science and knowledge of justice as there is of letters. Now an intentional blunderer in reading is more literate than an unintentional because he has more knowledge in that field; and as the more knowledgeable in letters is more literate, so the more knowledgeable in justice is the juster, and the intentional liar and deceiver, not the unintentional, is the one who knows what is just. The natural inference from the close parallel between Xenophon and the *Hippias* is that Socrates himself employed this dialectical device.<sup>1</sup> But on whom? Hippias we know, and Xenophon gives this conversation as an example of how Socrates talked to people who prided themselves on their education and wisdom (4.2.1). His object was to shake the faith of Euthydemus,<sup>2</sup> a difficult youth in whom nevertheless he saw great promise, in his own judgement and so make him receptive to other ideas. Elsewhere (3.9.4) Socrates answers a question by saying that he considers men who know how they ought to act but act otherwise as the very opposite of wise (or knowledgeable) and self-controlled; and this immediately precedes his identification of 'justice and all the rest of virtue' with knowledge or wisdom, on the ground that nobody who knows what is fine and good can choose anything else.

One thing we know for certain about Socrates is his claim that virtue is knowledge and all wrong action is involuntary.<sup>3</sup> It is equally certain, therefore, that when at the end of the *Hippias* he says that

<sup>1</sup> As Stallbaum saw, who discusses the passage in *Menex.* etc. 271 f. See also Grote, I, 398.

<sup>2</sup> Believed to be the σοι of Diocles mentioned at *Symp.* 222 b; certainly not the Sophist after whom P. named a dialogue.

<sup>3</sup> Besides passages in Plato such as *Prot.* 345 d, *Meno* 78 a-b, *Gorg.* 468 c, we have evidence in Xenophon (e.g. *Mem.* 4.6.6; vol. III, 455) and the explicit criticisms of Aristotle. See vol. III, 459 f.

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the man who willingly sins, *if he exists*, is no other than the good man, all the emphasis is on the condition. Both Socrates and Plato know that he does *not* exist, and Hippias has been led up the garden all the time. As Socrates adds: *for the present* (νῦν γε) it must appear so from the (in several ways fallacious) argument, but like Hippias he is unwilling to accept it. But why did Plato do it? Obviously he disliked Hippias (whom, unlike Protagoras,<sup>1</sup> he must have known personally), and enjoyed depicting his discomfiture at the hands of a not over-scrupulous Socrates; but it is difficult to agree with Wilamowitz that he would write a dialogue on a moral topic with no other purpose than this. Nor is it my impression that (as some critics have thought) Plato is holding back a lot that he himself knew or believed and leaving it for an intelligent reader to find out for himself by reading between the lines. It looks rather as if he is still wrestling with the paradoxes that Socrates bequeathed to him and has not quite taken their measure. Can it *really* be true that no one sins willingly? Well, let us see if we can make the opposite look equally absurd. Suppose we follow out the consequences of the generally assumed but *non*-Socratic opinion that some people do wrong voluntarily and with knowledge of what they are doing, and can show that it leads to absurd and immoral consequences. It is something like Zeno's method of defending Parmenides (*Parm.* 128c-d), but a very tentative essay in it.

The doctrine that knowledge of what is right is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for doing it, undoubtedly depended for Socrates on the analogy of the arts. The argument is most clearly exposed at *Gorg.* 460a-c: The man who has learned building, music or medicine is *ipso facto* an architect, musician or doctor. This is generalized into 'Whoever has learned anything is of the type which the knowledge produces', and so 'he who has learned justice is just'. If then, as Gorgias claims, a trained orator can tell justice from injustice, all orators must be just.<sup>2</sup> The doctrine itself was retained by

<sup>1</sup> Nestle (*Prot.* 45) says that P. could have known and heard Protagoras 'whether he died in 415 or 411'. In 415 P. would have been no more than twelve or thirteen, but in any case I have suggested in vol. III (262) that he died about 420. See also Taylor, *PMW* 236 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> On this argument see Dodds *ad loc.* (p. 218), who draws attention to its roots in earlier Greek thought. 'The originality of S. lay not in the invention of a private paradox... but in making explicit the unconscious presuppositions of traditional Greek thinking about conduct.'

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Plato, and what can be said in its favour has been said in vol. III.<sup>1</sup> When based on the craft analogy in the crude form in which we have it here in the *Hippias* and in the early part of the *Gorgias*, it undoubtedly involves a fallacy. To Socrates the truth of the doctrine was obvious, and he was probably unaware that one of his favourite arguments for it was, taken at its face value, unsound. It needed, at the least, support from his belief about the nature and needs of the *psyche*, which not everyone would accept. Since Plato took it over from him, we need not be surprised if he needed a little time to advance beyond it. But his more complex and searching mind would soon be assailed by doubts, and I suggest that in this *reductio ad absurdum* of the consequences of admitting the notion of conscious and voluntary wrongdoing we have one of his early attempts at defending it.

### (9) THE ION<sup>2</sup>

*Authenticity and date.* Though the list of scholars who, in the past, have rejected the *Ion* is, in E. N. Tigerstedt's word, 'imposing', and Ritter in 1910 claimed to have proved it spurious by language-statistics, few would doubt today that it is Plato's own work.<sup>3</sup> Estimates of its date have varied from before the death of Socrates to 391, the most probable estimate being between 394 and 391.<sup>4</sup> It bears all the marks of an early Socratic dialogue, and Wilamowitz, who dated it before 399, saw it as 'the attempt of a tiro' (*Pl.* II, 36).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 450ff., and for its retention by P. the ref. on p. 460 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For a critical review of previous scholarship (before 1958) see the introduction to Flashar's *Der Dial. Ion*.

<sup>3</sup> Tigerstedt, *P.'s Idea of Poet. Insp.* 18, Ritter, *N. Unters.* 217. There is also a compromise theory that it was sketched out by P. and finished by a pupil. (So Diller in *Hermes* 1955, following Schleiermacher.)

<sup>4</sup> On the question of date, including historical allusions to the Asclepieia and Panathenaea at 530a-b, and to events and personalities at 541c-d, see Flashar, *o.c.* 96-105. If these allusions are as commonly interpreted, it seems we must admit that P. saw no objection to making S. refer to events after his death. (See however Wilam. II, 33. On anachronisms in P. see p. 215 n. 1 below.) The *Menex.* provides an even more glaring anachronism; that in the *Symp.* is probable though not perhaps certain. (See pp. 313, 365 below.)

<sup>5</sup> Exceptions to an early dating relative to other dialogues have been few. Wyller (*Symb. Osl.* 1958, 38 n. 1) put it in the ambience of *Gorg.* and *Meno* as having 'structurally and thematically' nothing to do with the aporetic Socratic group; and Gauss (*Handk.* 2.1.12) put it late in the early group because he saw in it Plato's rejection of Socratic rationalism. (Contrast Stallbaum, *Menex.* etc. 339: 'Omnia spirant sapientiam artemque mere fere Socraticam.')



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*Note on rhapsodes and Homeridae.* The *Ion* is a conversation between Socrates and a rhapsode. This name (literally 'stitcher of lays', see Pind. *Nem.* 2 *ad init.*) was originally given to bards like Homer and Hesiod, who rendered their own poetry and accompanied it on the lyre (Plato, *Rep.* 600d, Ar. *Rhet.* 1403b22). Later it was applied to professional reciters, not themselves poets, who declaimed poetry, above all Homer's (see, e.g., Pl. *Laws* 658d), in various Greek cities and at the great festivals, where they drew large crowds and competed for prizes, distinguished by a staff and special clothing (*Ion* 535d). According to a certain Dieuchidas,<sup>1</sup> Solon decreed that at Athens they should repeat the whole of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in relays, though the introduction of this practice at the Panathenaea (cf. *Ion* 530b) is also attributed to Hipparchus, son of Pisistratus (ps.-Pl. *Hipparch.* 228b). To judge from two remarks in Xenophon, they were as a class admired for their mnemonic and histrionic, but not for their intellectual powers.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes confused with these rhapsodes, but also, it would seem, to be distinguished from them, were the Homeridae. Originally a *genos* (clan) in the island of Chios, they claimed descent from Homer and handed down from father to son the tradition of reciting his poems.<sup>3</sup> Later however the name was broadened to include 'rhapsodes' who did not claim Homeric ancestry. They were, however, also poets in their own right, rhapsodes in the early sense in which Homer himself was one, and in which Pindar mentions 'Homeridae, bards of stitched lays', using the word (ᾠιδός) regularly applied in Homer to the singer whose lays are his own. In this way they were believed to have added other 'Homeric' poems to the earlier *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. By Plato's time they had acquired yet another reputation, as authorities on Homer, not only repeating the poems by heart but expounding them and discoursing on Homeric

<sup>1</sup> Of Megara, *ap.* D.L. 1.57. For his date see Davison in *CQ* 1959.

<sup>2</sup> Xen. *Symp.* 3.6, *Mem.* 4.2.10 ('The rhapsodes render the poems perfectly, yet in themselves are utter fools'). This passage is probably too close to *Ion* for coincidence (e.g. it includes one of the Homer-extracts quoted there), but which came first cannot be actually proved. Even if Xen. knew the *Ion*, the evidence of his characters' statements is not thereby destroyed. See Diller, *Hermes* 1955, 172 and 176.

<sup>3</sup> The evidence on which this account of the Homeridae is based will be found in *RE* VIII, 2145 ff. (Rzach). See also Zs. Ritook, 'Die Homeriden', *Acta Antiqua* 1970.

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questions.<sup>1</sup> Outside the *Ion* there is no evidence that these commentators were ever called rhapsodes, and the most reasonable conclusion is that Ion (who is otherwise unknown, and for all we know invented by Plato for his own purposes) is exceptional among rhapsodes in combining recitation with exposition. He himself says that his 'fine thoughts on Homer' deserve a golden crown from the *Homeridae* (530d), thus linking his activities with theirs.

### The dialogue

#### (Direct dramatic form)

Socrates meets Ion of Ephesus, fresh from victory in a contest of rhapsodes at Epidauros, and hoping for similar success at the Panathenaea. S. envies rhapsodes: they not only wear bodily adornments worthy of their art but spend their lives with great poets, especially Homer the greatest and most divine of all, learning his verses and understanding his mind also, for a good rhapsode is the interpreter of the poet's thoughts to his audience.<sup>2</sup>

Ion agrees. This has been his chief endeavour, and he can utter such fine thoughts on Homer that he deserves a crown from the *Homeridae*. Not even Metrodorus, Stesimbrotus or Glaucon could excel him.<sup>3</sup> In answer to questions from S., Ion insists that his expository powers are confined to Homer, but admits, first, that where Homer and Hesiod agree he could discuss both equally well,

<sup>1</sup> See *Phaedrus* 252b and *Isocr.*, *Hel.* 65, which fit well with *Ion* 530d and *Rep.* 599e. Rzsch (*RE* 2148) oddly uses these latter as evidence for a different, more general use of the name *Homeridae* as venerated or admirers of Homer. Though he does not mention them, he is presumably taking the words 'Ομήρου ἐπαινέτης, which occur at *Ion* 536d, 541e and elsewhere (*Prot.* 309a, *Rep.* 606e), to refer to the *Homeridae* (like Stallbaum, *Menex.* etc. 331f.).

<sup>2</sup> That is, by the way he delivers them, as an actor interprets a part. There is no reason to think that in this ironical praise S. has anything more than recitation in mind, though as it turns out Ion interprets in other ways too.

<sup>3</sup> Metrodorus of Lampsacus, said to have been a friend of Anaxagoras, was noted for his fanciful interpretations of the Homeric poems as allegories of natural phenomena. Texts are in *DK* ii, 49, no. 61. See also *ZN* 1.2.1185 n. 2, 1254 n. 4, and Nestle's article in *Philol.* 1907. For Stesimbrotus see *RE* 2. Reihe, vi. Halbb. 2463f. It will be noted that neither of these, with whom Ion compares himself as an expositor, was a rhapsode. At *Xen. Symp.* 3.6 Stesimbrotus is expressly contrasted with rhapsodes because, unlike them, he understands the 'hidden meanings' of the poems. (ὑπόνοιαι, i.e. allegory, cf. *Rep.* 378d, *Plut. De aud. poet.* 19e.) The identity of Glaucon is not quite certain (Flashar, *Der D. Ion* 35).

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and secondly that whether they agree or disagree on a topic, e.g. prophecy, a seer and not he himself would best explain their agreement or disagreement.<sup>1</sup> S. cannot understand this restriction of his powers to Homer. Do not all the poets speak of the same things – wars, encounters between good and bad men, laymen and experts, relations of gods with each other and with men, heavenly and underworld events, genealogies of gods and heroes? Yes, but not in the same way as Homer. Better or worse, then? Much worse. Well, in other arts, like mathematics or medicine, where many speak on the same subject, it is the same man who can judge both the good and the bad speakers. This, Ion must agree, is a universal truth. But if one and the same man is a good judge of all who speak on the same subject, and Homer shares the same subject-matter with most other poets, Ion must be an equally good authority on them all.

Why is it then, asks Ion, that talk of other poets bores me to sleep and I have nothing to contribute to it, but at the mention of Homer I wake up and take notice and have plenty to say? S. offers to explain, encouraged by the ingenuous rhapsode, who ‘loves listening to you wise men’ (an epithet which S. predictably disclaims in favour of rhapsodes). Wherever cool judgement, knowledge and skill are involved, every art can be understood and appreciated as a whole. Whoever heard of an art critic who could assess Polygnotus but no other painter, or was interested in a single sculptor or musician but bored and useless with the rest? Ion can only repeat that what he says about himself and Homer is fact, and S. proceeds to his explanation. The case of poets and their interpreters is different. It is not knowledge or skill in an art (*technē*) that moves them, but a divine force. Like a magnet, the Muse inspires and possesses the poets directly, and through them others are possessed, as a magnet, by transmitting its power, can hold suspended a chain of iron rings. Poetry is not a craft, but the effect of divine possession akin to bacchic frenzy. Poets, like prophets, are *deprived of their reason* (this is repeated: 534b and c) by

<sup>1</sup> It is hardly worth pointing out all the fallacies committed by S. in this little work, but according to his own principles the best judge in this case would not be a μάντις, who is as much ἐκφρων as a poet, but a ‘sane’ authority on μαντική. So Plato himself at *Tim.* 72a (p. 166 n. 2 above).

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a god who simply uses them as a mouthpiece.<sup>1</sup> Think of Tynnichus, a man who never wrote a good poem in his life, till suddenly he wrote the paean 'which everyone is singing'. Clearly the god had chosen to demonstrate through 'the most wretched of poets' that good poetry is not a human achievement at all.

Ion is delighted ('Your words go straight to my heart'), and fully ready to agree that as mediator between poet and listener he himself is a link in the chain of the possessed. When he is rendering pathetic or terrifying scenes, his eyes fill with tears and his hair stands on end – hardly sane behaviour, as S. points out, for one attending a festival in festal garb and surrounded by friendly faces. And the magnetism runs through him to the last link in the chain, his audience, who are affected in the same way. (If they were not, says Ion, *he* would be the one to weep, for loss of his reward.) So (continues S.), just as different Muses inspire different poets, a particular poet can pass on the afflatus to a rhapsode. Ion is possessed by Homer, and by this possession, not by any skill or science, can appreciate and expound him. To this shifting of the ground from recitation to criticism and exegesis Ion demurs: no one who hears him talk on Homer could think he was possessed and out of his mind.

On what Homeric topics, then, can Ion discourse? On all, is the reply. S. then shows, by copious quotation, that Homer often writes quite technically of various accomplishments – driving, medicine, fishing, prophecy – and gets Ion's agreement to the principle that different arts represent different types of knowledge, and that the best judge of whether Homer is writing well on each art is the expert in that art. What, then, in Homer, pertains to the rhapsode's art so that Ion, who is a rhapsode, will be the proper judge of it? He is still inclined to answer 'Everything', but being reminded that he is contradicting himself, claims for it everything except what is the

<sup>1</sup> ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸς ἔστιν ὁ λέγων, 534d; οἱ δὲ ποιηταὶ οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ ἐρμηνεῖς εἰσιν, 534e. ἐρμηνεύς with its cognates, usually translated 'interpreter' etc., has two meanings: (1) interpreter, i.e. translator from a foreign tongue or explainer of the obscure; (2) messenger or go-between, simply reporting what he is told. So at *Rep.* 524b, where 'interpretation' or 'explanation' would make no sense, *Symp.* 202e, and here. To mistranslate it at 534e4 as 'interpreters', with Jowett and others, is to destroy the point which S. wishes to emphasize, the utter *passivity* of the poet. A man cannot interpret when out of his wits, οἷς νοῦς μὴ πάρεστι 534d3. Hence Ion's demurral at 536d.

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special province of other *technai*. What does this include? 'What is right and proper for a man or a woman to say, a slave or a free man, a ruler or a subject.'

But S. returns inexorably to subject-matter. Will a rhapsode know better than a slave-cowherd what he should say to quieten angry bulls? Will he know what a spinning-woman should say about working with wool? And so on. At the final question Ion digs his toes in. Yes, what a commander should say in exhorting his troops – that sort of thing the rhapsode will know. S. is surprised. Perhaps Ion is a military expert as well as a rhapsode, but if so, in which capacity does he have this knowledge? Ion thinks it makes no difference, and by sticking to his guns is finally forced to the absurd conclusion that the two arts are the same, and that he himself as a rhapsode would make an outstanding general (though he boggles at the converse), having learned the art from Homer. When S. suggests that it is his duty to Hellas to offer his services in this capacity rather than as a rhapsode, he excuses himself on the grounds of the subject status of Ephesus and the national prejudices of other Greek states, which S. quickly shows by examples to be invalid. No. Either his praises of Homer result from knowledge and art, in which case he is wrongfully concealing his knowledge, unwilling even to say in what subjects he is expert, or as S. believes, he acts without technical knowledge but by a divine gift, actually possessed by Homer, and so blameless. Ion chooses the latter alternative as more splendid.

### *Comment: poetic inspiration in the Ion*

'A poet', says Socrates (534b), 'is a light, winged and sacred being.' The first two epithets at least could well be applied to the *Ion* itself, and the heavy hand of scholarship has done much, if not to crush, at least to take the bloom from its wings. The amount of attention accorded to this opusculum, only a few pages long and certainly no more than half serious, is of course accounted for by the importance attached to anything which will throw light on Plato's attitude to poets and poetry. Here we have his first words on a topic to which he returns in some of his greatest works, and on which his apparent ambivalence has led to a variety of theories, notably that of a Plato

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divided against himself, an 'anti-Platon chez Platon'. The resulting interest in the *Ion* has been widespread ever since Goethe, whom most commentators mention<sup>1</sup> along with Plato's own remark in the *Republic* (607b) about 'the old disagreement between philosophy and poetry' – though as to that, they themselves disagree. When Grube says that both the inspiration of the poet and the beauty of his work are here freely admitted, 'and there is here no quarrel between poetry and philosophy, so long as poetry does not...lay any claim to knowledge', he might be directly challenging Jowett's 'The old quarrel between philosophy and poetry...is already working in the mind of Plato, and is embodied by him in the contrast between Socrates and Ion.'<sup>2</sup>

The first thing to strike a modern reader must be the total incomprehension of the nature of poetry shown by Socrates in the questions through which he tries to elicit the requirements of a good critic. He approaches a poem as if it were a textbook of practical instruction in some craft or mode of life, to be judged only by an expert in the particular practice described. Aesthetic criteria are never mentioned, and although for a moment he waxes lyrical in describing the divine afflatus, we are bound to remember this same inspiration being mentioned in the *Apology* with obviously ironical intent simply as the reason why no poet seems to understand his own poems.

Though we are entitled to criticize the Greeks from our own point of view, to understand Plato we must know what was expected of a poet, how his task was conceived by himself and his audience (for poetry was written to be heard, not read), in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. We know that in general his function was held to be primarily didactic, and that up to the fifth century moral and political advice was commonly offered in metrical form. This has been illustrated in the last volume (29f.). We may remind ourselves briefly of Hesiod,

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the ref. in Flashar, *o.c.* 1 f. and Leisegang, *RE* 2377.

<sup>2</sup> Grube, *P.'s Th.* 182, Jowett, *Dialogues* 1, 102. So too Flashar, *o.c.* p. 1: the 'old quarrel' appears in *Ion* for the first time as a matter of philosophical concern; and Friedländer, *Pl.* II, 136: 'That "ancient quarrel between philosophy and poetry"...cut through the centre of his own existence... Plato has grasped the Heraclitean tension in his own nature as a thinker and has given it form as a poet.' Unlike Grube too, Wilamowitz (*Pl.* II, 43) thought that here P. makes only the negative point that poets have no knowledge. Only much later, in the *Phaedrus*, did he recognize the good in their unconscious creation.

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Solon and Theognis, of the dictum of Aristophanes that poets fulfil for adults the function of schoolmasters for boys, and the way in which, in his *Frogs*, the poetical contest between Aeschylus and Euripides is fought mainly on the basis of the moral and practical effect of their work. Protagoras (in Plato) describes the poets as having undertaken in the past the same educational mission as the Sophists, and tells how Athenian schoolboys learned good poems by heart with the object of stirring them to emulation of the deeds of heroes therein related and glorified. Hippias uses Homeric characters in a sermon on manly behaviour, and we may be certain that Ion's 'embellishment' of Homer followed the same moral lines.<sup>1</sup> Havelock could even write that Plato's conception of the traditional role of poetry up to his time was basically correct. 'Poetry was not "literature" but a political and social necessity. It was not an art form, nor the creation of private imagination, but an encyclopaedia, maintained by co-operative effort on the part of the "best Greek polities".'<sup>2</sup>

Where his own knowledge and wisdom failed him, the poet appealed to the Muses, but solely, it would seem, as a higher authority: he did not ask them to enter, inspire and possess him. So in the *Iliad* he invokes their aid, but 'it falls on the side of content and not of form. Always he asks the Muses what he is to say, not how he is to say it; and the matter he asks for is always factual.'<sup>3</sup> Before recording the Greek order of battle, with the provenance, number of ships and commander's name for each contingent, he prays: 'Come with me now, ye Muses... for ye are goddesses, ye are present and know all things, but we hear only report and have no knowledge... I could never tell or name the host... did not the Olympian Muses... recount

<sup>1</sup> *Prot.* 316d, 325e-326a (and cf. Protagoras's own opinion of the educative value of poetic exegesis at 338e-339a); *H. Maj.* 286a-b; *Ion* 530d, ὡς εὖ κεκόσμηκα τὸν Ὅμηρον. Thus men like Ion and the Homeridae come very close to the Sophists in this respect. Antisthenes provides another example (fr. 51-8 Caizzi).

<sup>2</sup> *Preface to P.* 125, and cf. 43. The interesting thesis of this book is that up to P.'s time the force of conservatism retained for poetry the universal function which it had had in a pre-literate society. It was still in a transitional stage. Homer was 'the encyclopaedist', and his poetry as an 'epic archetype of the orally preserved word was composed as a compendium of matters to be memorised, of a tradition to be maintained, of a *paideia* to be transmitted' (p. 49). At Athens the drama 'became the Attic supplement to Homer as a vehicle of preserved experience, of moral teaching and of historical memory' (p. 48). Cf. also Taylor, *PMW* 38f.

<sup>3</sup> Dodds, *G. and I.* 80. With what is said above see his pp. 80-2.

all those who came to Troy' (*Il.* 2.484-92). Hesiod and Pindar express a similar relationship.<sup>1</sup> The poet receives supernatural aid in his story, as do his heroes in their adventures, but there is no question of possession, ecstasy or frenzy. The Muse is not *in* the poet, replacing his own mind, as Dionysus is in the bacchants, with whom Plato compares the poet in the *Ion* (534a). There may even have been an element of novelty in Plato's claim that when a poet wrote well he was divinely inspired, possessed and 'out of his mind' (ἐνθουσιάζων, ἔκφρων). It cannot be traced further back than Democritus, who, though an older man, lived well into Plato's lifetime.<sup>2</sup> Later, in Cicero, Democritus and Plato are cited by name as sole authorities for the doctrine that no poet can be great or good without the inspiration of madness caused by a divine power. Horace derides those who, because *Democritus* rated 'ingenium' (Gk. *physis*, natural gifts) above 'ars' (Gk. *technē*, cf. *Ion* 533e6) and admitted only mad poets to Helicon, let their nails and beards grow, gave up washing and sought remote places.<sup>3</sup> If Plato, as many have thought, borrowed his ideas of poetic inspiration from Democritus,<sup>4</sup> it is certain that (if not in the *Ion*, then in his later works) he transformed them into something peculiarly his own.

The thesis that a mystical explanation of poetry on the lines of Dionysiac possession did not appear until the fifth century, and was a philosophic refinement on a mere Homeric conception of the relation between the poet and the divine powers, cannot perhaps be taken as proved, depending as it does on an argument *ex silentio*;<sup>5</sup> but historical

<sup>1</sup> Dodds, *o.c.* 82 and nn. 121 and 122 on p. 101. But see also Tigerstedt's critical note, *JHI* 1970, 169 n. 32.

<sup>2</sup> For his date, see vol. II, 386 n. 2. But to the authorities there mentioned should be added H. de Ley in *L'Ant. Cl.* 1968, 621-6, who argues again that D. was at least as old as Socrates.

<sup>3</sup> Hor. *A.P.* 295-8, Cic. *Div.* 1.38.80, *De or.* 2.46.194. D.'s theories of inspiration are mentioned in vol. II, 476f., and fully treated by Delatte, *Conceptions* etc. 28-79. The relevant fr. in DK are 18 and 21.

<sup>4</sup> For a comparison between D. and the *Ion*, see Delatte, *o.c.* 57ff., who believed that even the striking figure of the magnetized rings may be owed to D.'s scientific interest in magnetism. Close relationship is suggested by a comparison of the language of D., fr. 18 (what a poet writes μετ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ καὶ ἱεροῦ πνεύματος καλὰ κάρτα ἐστίν) with that of *Apol.* 22b-c: like prophets, poets say πολλά καὶ καλὰ φύσει τινὶ καὶ ἐνθουσιάζοντες. For the combination of φύσις and ἐνθουσιασμός cf. D., fr. 21 Ὁμηρος φύσεως λαχὼν θεαζούσης. (On θεάζειν, Delatte 32f.)

<sup>5</sup> And it has to be noted that in the *Laws* (719c) P. himself refers it to a παλαιὸς μῦθος and says that everyone believes it; but this may be a literary artifice. On the whole question Tigerstedt in *JHI* 1970 provides a thorough review of modern scholarship, and his conclusion is the one adopted here.



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probability is on its side. It was in the sixth and early fifth centuries that the Greek mind began to be fascinated by the problem of the One and the many, their mysterious relationship and in some sort identity.<sup>1</sup> To the Presocratic philosophers it appeared as the relation between the one everlasting substance of the cosmos and its manifold and changing phenomena, whereas the Dionysiac worshipper sought the identification of the many separated souls with the One divine being in the experience of *enthusiasmos*, the spirit of the god entering into each one. It would not be surprising if it was only after these ideas had been made philosophically respectable (a process in which the Orphic writers played no small part) that the picture of the poet as, in Plato's words (533e-534e), 'with a god in him and possessed', 'deprived of his mind by the god', as nothing but a channel through whom 'the god himself is the speaker', could replace the Homeric conception of him as simply composing his own poems with divine aid. In this conception, far from being out of his mind, he was a clever teacher and educator, in fact the original *sophistes* (vol. III, 29f.).

Of Homer this was truer than of any other poet. If he was 'the Bible of the Greeks', it is as if we not only sought for moral and religious guidance in the Bible but also regarded a passage like I *Kings* 6 and 7 as a practical treatise for builders.<sup>2</sup> But guidance for life was more important than technical skills. It was for this that he was taught to Athenian boys at school and memorized by grown men like Niceratus (Xen. *Symp.* 4.6). The eulogists of Homer, says

<sup>1</sup> See vol. I, 132 with ref. in n. 1. More evidence is adduced in Guthrie, *OGR*, esp. chh. 4 and 7.

<sup>2</sup> Homer's reputation as a master of technical skills is less well attested than his moral and political authority, and it is perhaps a fault in modern writers (e.g. Verdenius in *Mnem.* 1943, 246-51) that after merely stating the former they go on to adduce many and varied sources for the latter. Indeed for Homer as technical expert we have only the word of P. (cf. also *Rep.* 600a) and Xenophon; and when Xen.'s Niceratus says (*Symp.* 4.6) that anyone who wants to be a manager, orator, general, ruler or charioteer should consult him because of his knowledge of Homer, it can be argued that he is only plagiarizing the *Ion*. (So Flashar 25, while admitting that the chronological priority of the *Ion* cannot be certainly demonstrated.) Socrates's pre-occupation with 'shoemakers, carpenters and smiths' (Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.37; in Plato, *Gorg.* 491a, it is 'shoemakers, fullers and cooks') may have made Plato exaggerate this side of Homer-interpretation, but he could hardly have invented it. Havelock finds his evidence in the content of the Homeric poems themselves: if classical Greece treated them as a practical handbook, this was only a survival of the pre-literate age in which they took shape. See his *Pr. to P.*, esp. ch. 4, 'The Homeric Encyclopaedia'.

## *The Ion*

Plato (and these included Ion; see 542b and cf. 536d, 541e), claim that he is the educator of Greece, and that for culture and the management of human affairs one should read and order one's whole life by him (*Rep.* 606e). Some say that Homer, and the tragedians his followers, understood everything about technical skills, the virtues and vices of humanity, and religion; and that a good poet must know his subject if he is to write at all (*ib.* 598e).

When therefore Plato criticizes the claims of the poets, and of current panegyrics on Homer by the Homeridae and others,<sup>1</sup> he is not just perversely distorting the nature of poetry but faithfully representing it as it still appeared to most of his contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> This view of it as the complete guide to practical achievement and moral conduct he rejected on both intellectual and ethical grounds. It was spurious, because in fact Homer and the others did *not* understand the technical or other principles underlying the actions which they describe; and many of their stories, even of the behaviour of the gods, were the reverse of morally edifying. Their ignorance is already remarked on in the *Apology*, and his main onslaught on both counts, but especially on their moral influence, comes in the *Republic* (pp. 451f. below). Taught by Socrates to reject the image of the poet as *sophistes*, with a wisdom and knowledge of his own, Plato offered, as an alternative explanation of their utterance of 'many fine things', his theory of divine possession, of the poet as a mindless medium for a god's utterance just like the prophetess (*Ion* 534c-d), of whose 'maddened mouth' Heraclitus had spoken in the previous century (fr. 92).

But how seriously did Plato hold this theory, and what was its effect on his estimation of the value of poetry? This has always been a puzzle, and since he has much more to say about it in later dialogues it certainly cannot be answered from the *Ion* alone, which it would

<sup>1</sup> Some scholars argue that his target here is Ion alone, a particularly foolish rhapsode, others that it is rhapsodes in general but not poets (examples in Flashar, 12 with n. 3), and others that he is only using the rhapsodes to get at the poets (Tigerstedt, *o.c.* 21f.). It should be obvious that the subject is both the poets (with particular reference to Homer) and their *ἐπαινέται*. About the latter there can be no doubt, and the poets, the first link in the chain that continues to Ion and his audience, can hardly be excluded, especially when one takes the *Apology* into account.

<sup>2</sup> For further evidence, from others besides P., see Verdenius in *Mnem.* 1943, 246-51.

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be rash to read in the light of *Phaedrus*, *Symposium* or *Laws*. Those who do, and argue for Plato's unqualified respect for poetic inspiration, tend to play down phrases like 'not in his senses' and 'the god having taken away their wits',<sup>1</sup> and omit any reference to the unfortunate Tynnichus. The story of this 'worst of poets' who once and once only produced a lyric whose superb quality and divine origin are vouched for by the fact that everyone is singing it, while its claim to be 'the Muses' own discovery' is supported by internal testimony, can only be intended for our amusement, however easily it is swallowed by Ion. Moreover the phrase 'by divine dispensation' (θεῖα μοίρα), used here of the poetic gift (536c, d, 542a; cf. 536c), is applied in the *Meno* (99e) to the politicians of the day, who are compared in respect of divine possession with the poets and prophets; and neither Plato nor Socrates believed contemporary politicians to be divinely endowed. The emphasis in both cases is on success achieved without personal merit or understanding.

Some of Plato's dialogues are such masterpieces of imaginative writing that many find his apparent hostility to poetic and imaginative literature almost incredibly paradoxical. Apart from this, there are two chief reasons why scholars have found it difficult to believe that his remarks about poetic inspiration are meant disparagingly: (1) the impressive and in parts beautiful language of Socrates at 533c-534d; (2) the high regard shown for it in later dialogues, especially the *Phaedrus*. The first is very much at the mercy of subjective impressions, and to assist a reader to form his own I have appended as straight a translation as possible. The second cannot be fully assessed until later, but we may note (a) that according to the magnet metaphor not only the poet but Ion himself and all the honest citizens in his audience are in some degree under the same divine influence; (b) that in a much later work the divine madness of the poet itself becomes a reason for keeping his compositions under strict legal control. (See *Laws* 719c-d.)

The *Ion* is above all a Socratic dialogue, amusing us by displaying the bland perversity of its hero when faced with one whom he thinks

<sup>1</sup> οὐκ ἔμψρων, ἔκψρων, ὁ θεὸς ἐξαίρουμένος τούτων τὸν νοῦν (534a, b, c), οἷς νοῦς μὴ πάρεστιν (534d).

## The Ion

pretentious and stupid. But as in other early dialogues, Plato is beginning to feel his way beyond Socrates. This first full description of the poet's state of mind (or non-mind) is certainly different from the curt dismissal of their god-sent ignorance in the *Apology*, and a certain note of sympathy has crept in. He never flinched from the thesis that poets, unlike philosophers, wrote without knowledge and without regard to the moral effect of their poems, and that therefore they must be either banned or censored; but I would tentatively suggest that in the theory of divine possession he saw a possible defence of his own susceptibility to their charm (which he confesses at *Rep.* 607c), sufficient at least to account for the extremely respectful and honorific *congé* accorded to a poet in the *Republic* (398a).

Here we may leave this light-hearted little piece, whose concern with poetry has probably led us to give it more serious attention than is good for the enjoyment that Plato intended it to afford.

### ADDENDUM: TRANSLATION OF 533C-534D

Your speaking so well about Homer is, as I said, not an art. It is a divine force that moves you, like the stone which Euripides calls Magnet [fr. 567 N.] but most people the stone of Heracles. It not only attracts iron rings but transmits its power to them so that they can do the same, attracting other rings, until sometimes there is a long chain of bits and rings of iron suspended from each other, every one of them depending for its power on the original stone. So too the Muse takes possession of some men herself, and through these others are filled with her spirit until a chain is formed. All good epic poets (and it is the same with lyricists) utter all their fine compositions not through art but because divinely possessed. Just as those under corymbantic influence are not sane when they dance,<sup>1</sup> so it is not from a sane mind that the lyric poets produce their beautiful songs. When once they embark on melody and rhythm, they rave and are possessed, and their souls behave like those of the bacchants who draw honey and milk from the rivers when the god possesses them, but not when they are in their right minds. Poets say so themselves – tell us, I mean, that the songs which they bring us they draw from honeyed fountains in I know not what gardens and vales of the Muses – just like bees, and flying like bees too.

<sup>1</sup> See Rohde, *Psyche* (Eng. tr.) p. 307, notes 18 and 19, for some evidence that this comparison is not necessarily flattering to the poets.

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They speak the truth, for a poet is a light, winged and holy thing, nor can he create until he is possessed and out of his mind, and his wits are no longer in him. Until he has this gift, no man can be poet or prophet. Since, then, it is not by art that they compose, and say many fine things about their subjects – as you do about Homer – but by divine allotment, each one can only succeed at what the Muse sets him to – dithyrambs, encomia, hyporchemata,<sup>1</sup> epic, iambics – and is no good at anything else. It is not art, but a divine power. After all, if it were by art that they knew how to speak well on one subject, they could do so on all the others. The purpose of the god in taking away their wits and using them as his servants, together with seers and inspired prophets, is that we who hear them may know that it is not they who are making these so precious utterances, deprived as they are of their wits, but the god himself who speaks to us through them. [There follows the story of Tynnichus.]

### SOCRATIC DIALOGUES: SUMMING-UP

In the nine dialogues of this section Plato gives an affectionate but candid portrait of Socrates as he knew him, and his way of going to work, but at the same time shows himself puzzled, or not fully satisfied, by the philosophical implications of some Socratic tenets and takes a few tentative steps further, thus foreshadowing some of the problems which will concern him deeply later on. As for any doctrine of Forms, some of these dialogues have no connexion with it, and the language of the others does not suggest the transcendence of Forms or anything beyond the conclusions of Socrates as he argued from two premises generally accepted by common sense: (1) If two things are to be called by the same name *n* they must share a common form or essence which is within each one and gives it (or rather is) its character *qua n*; if any do not, the common name has been wrongly applied to them. (2) Justice, holiness and other virtues are objective realities.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Song accompanied by dance and pantomimic action' (LSJ).

<sup>2</sup> For forms in *Euthyphro* see pp. 114–41 above, in *Laches* 133f., in *Lysis* 150–3, in *H. Maj.* 188–91.

## V

# PROTAGORAS, MENO, EUTHYDEMUS, GORGIAS, MENEXENUS

### INTRODUCTORY

The dialogues here grouped together have a great deal in common. First, they differ from the previous group in being of much greater length and elaboration. Secondly, though Plato depicted the Sophists in many works, including one called *The Sophist*, the *Protagoras* and *Euthydemus* are the two that are devoted exclusively to them, while the *Gorgias* shows Socrates combatting an extreme form of sophistic ethics. *Protagoras* and *Meno* attack the same question: 'Can virtue be taught?', and in both Socrates concludes that they have been premature in asking it before settling what virtue *is*. The question recurs in *Euthydemus*, and the argument that so-called 'goods' only become good through right use, and that therefore knowledge is the only unfailingly good thing, is repeated there and in *Meno*. An entirely new note is struck in *Meno* and *Gorgias* by the introduction of the immortality of the soul, in *Meno* as a solution to the problem of the possibility of knowledge, and in *Gorgias* as subject of the first of Plato's great eschatological myths designed to demonstrate that the righteous life is, in the end, the most rewarding. The short *Menexenus* is here treated as a tail-piece to the *Gorgias*: in the *Gorgias* Plato said what he thought about contemporary rhetoric and its moral assumptions, and in the *Menexenus* he gives a sample of it.

### (I) THE PROTAGORAS

*Date.* Many nineteenth-century critics thought the *Protagoras* a youthful work, written well before the death of Socrates, and for von Arnim in 1914 it was the earliest dialogue of all. Ritter thought it very early both on linguistic grounds and because, like Wilamowitz, he could not believe that Plato would have portrayed Socrates so

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unflatteringly after his martyr's fate. Recent critics think differently. For Burnet and Taylor, as earlier for Grote, the perfection of its artistic technique ruled it out as a youthful composition. Philosophical considerations reinforce this view. So far, single virtues have been discussed, and the dialogues broke off at the point where they seemed to be merging into virtue as a whole. That they should do so was something that Plato had accepted on the authority of Socrates, but he had not yet worked out the relationship for himself. In the *Protagoras* his subject is virtue as such, and the relationship of the several virtues to it and to each other, and taking into account the greater elaboration of the argument, the natural inference is that it was written after the shorter, more limited pieces. We may regard it, with Nestle, as the last of the Socratic dialogues, in the sense that, though taking the argument further than the others, it maintains the 'pure this-worldliness' of the Socratic outlook and shows no trace of the mathematical, metaphysical and eschatological interests which link Plato with the Pythagoreans and are reasonably thought to have been fostered by his first visit to South Italy and Sicily. For this reason Nestle put it with the earlier group and separated it sharply from the *Gorgias* and *Meno*. The reasons for grouping them together have already been given, but that they are divided by the Italian journey is very probable, and at least we may side with Hackforth and others rather than Grube in thinking that the *Protagoras* preceded the *Gorgias*.<sup>1</sup>

*Dramatic date.* This is adequately discussed by Taylor (*PMW* 236) and assigned to 433 B.C. or earlier. We are in the full glory of the Periclean Age, the Peloponnesian War is still in the future, Alcibiades just out of boyhood, 'his beard beginning to grow' (309a), Agathon the tragic poet is an unknown stripling (315d-e) and the two sons of Pericles are present, and described by Protagoras as promising young men (328d). They died in the plague of 329. In the face of all this, the reference to the *Savages* of the comic dramatist Pherecrates (327d),

<sup>1</sup> References for this paragraph: von Arnim, *Jugendd.* 3 and 34-5; Ritter, *Unters. über P.* 127, *Essence* 60 n. 1; Wilamowitz, *Pl.* 1, 149; Burnet, *Platonism* 52 n. 7; Taylor, *PMW* 235; Grote, *Pl.* 1, 198; Nestle, *Prot.* 43; Hackforth, *CQ* 1928, 42; Grube, *P.'s Th.* xii, 58f. ('The *Protagoras* takes up the problem exactly where the *Gorgias* left it.')

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produced in 420 (Athen. 5.218d), must be accepted as an anachronism introduced for the sake of an apt allusion.<sup>1</sup>

*Scene and characters.* In no other dialogue has Plato lavished so much care on these, or succeeded so brilliantly in displaying his powers of vivid presentation.<sup>2</sup> If the *Protagoras* conveyed no philosophical lesson, it would remain a superb work of literature. It must be read, not just read about. As we listen through its pages to the talk of some of the most notable intellectual figures of that great generation, each at his most typical (and if with his idiosyncrasies a little exaggerated, none the worse for that), we need no longer ask why, in spite of his disparagement of the written word, Plato chose to write, nor why, precisely on account of it, he chose the dialogue form. We also see Plato exploiting to the full the possibilities of the reported form (already encountered in *Lysis* and *Charmides*) for conveying a lively description of setting and people. As a small but striking illustration of his eye for the maximum dramatic effect, we have the comment of Protagoras on the sons of Pericles (328c-d): 'They are still young, and there is promise in them.' Plato's first readers knew that, a few years later, the plague carried off both within one week. More than that, Plutarch, who gives this information, quotes a passage written by Protagoras himself in admiration of the exemplary manner in which the great statesman bore this double loss.<sup>3</sup>

Of the chief characters no more need be said here, as with other Sophists they form the staple subject of Part One of the previous volume. Indeed Protagoras might be said to be its hero.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> We shall meet Plato's anachronisms again. Some are listed by Robin, *Platon* 25f., and Zeller wrote a monograph *Über die Anachronismen in den Plat. Gesprächen* (1873).

<sup>2</sup> *The Parasites*, a comedy of Eupolis produced in 421, also portrayed a gathering of Sophists and others, including Protagoras, at the house of Callias, and Wilamowitz (*Pl.* 1, 140) assumed that Plato took over the scene. Writing after the deaths of his characters, he may well have found this contemporary satire helpful in restoring them to life for a brief spell.

<sup>3</sup> Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 118e-f, *Pericles* ch. 36.

<sup>4</sup> What is known of Protagoras, Prodicus, Hippias and Critias is concentrated in ch. 11, but see also the index, for their teachings are distributed through the discussions of the earlier chapters.



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## *The dialogue<sup>1</sup>*

*(Reported form, narrated by Socrates)*

Socrates tells how an impetuous young friend Hippocrates (otherwise unknown) woke him before daylight to beg for an introduction to Protagoras, who is staying in Athens, and whose pupil he wishes to become. While dawn breaks they pace the courtyard and S. puts H. through an interrogation designed to show that he does not know what a Sophist is and is therefore acting rashly in committing himself to one who, in S.'s view, is 'a dealer in mind-food', and like other retailers, a clever advertiser of his own wares. The young man is to be put on his guard, and meet the Sophist in a mood very different from that of the flatterers who throng the house where he is staying. His host is Callias, the culture-hungry millionaire 'who has paid more money to Sophists than all the others put together',<sup>2</sup> and his house is full to overflowing with Sophists and their admirers.

After some words with the porter, who mistakes them for more Sophists, S. and H. enter the house and S. introduces H. to Protagoras, who launches into a eulogy of the Sophist's art as an ancient one, and promises to make H. 'better every day'. (H. takes no further part in the conversation.) This gives S. his cue. Better at what? Zeuxippus, e.g., would improve his painting, Orthagoras his music. Prot. calls this a good question, and replies that his instruction will be purely practical: how to manage his own affairs and the state's as well, to speak effectively and be a leader in political life; in short he will impart skill (*technē*) or excellence (*aretē*) in politics and citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

S. is interested. He had not thought that this kind of 'virtue' was anything that could be imparted by instruction or training, and has observed that Athenian democracy appears to be founded on the same view: in technical matters like architecture or naval design they

<sup>1</sup> A summary will also be found in my Penguin translation, 30-7.

<sup>2</sup> For Callias and a short description of the scene, see vol. III, 41.

<sup>3</sup> The practical associations of ἀρετή, and its close connexion with τέχνη, making natural to a Greek what appears to us as a confusion between technical and moral excellence, have been noted in vol. III (66 n. 1, 252-5). The two are used interchangeably in *Prot.*: cf. 322b3 and 5 with d7 and e2-3. I keep the traditional translation of ἀρετή as 'virtue', but we must have this proviso always in mind.

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will only accept the advice of a trained expert, whereas on questions of public policy they listen to any citizen, whatever his education or lack of it.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the ablest statesmen do not seem able to impart their accomplishments to others, even their own sons.<sup>2</sup> Can Prot. demonstrate that virtue can really be taught?

He replies with a long *epideixis*,<sup>3</sup> beginning with a myth of the origins of society and civilization.<sup>4</sup> The upshot of this is that though technical ability sufficient for individual sustenance was original in man as a rational creature, the moral qualities necessary for social and political life were not, but were only acquired after harsh experience of the dangers of living 'scattered' among physically stronger animals. Thus although these virtues are not an original part of human nature, they are necessarily present to some extent in everyone who is neither dead nor a social outcast. This explains why the Athenians admit that every citizen, not just a limited class of trained politicians, may have a contribution to make to the Assembly. At the same time they do agree that it is acquired by teaching in the widest sense, though not necessarily by formal instruction. Life in a civilized community is itself an education in the requisite virtues, just as it is in the native language. From birth onwards the process is carried on by parents, nurses, tutors and schoolmasters, and for adults by the laws, whose primary purpose is educative, and by a man's neighbours, for it is to everyone's advantage that his neighbour be just and good. Nor is it true that statesmen do not instruct their sons. If a son is not equal to his father, that is due to a difference of natural endowment. A Sophist like himself can only add the finishing touches which enable a pupil not only to be a good citizen but to occupy a leading position in the state.

After expressing his profound admiration, S. confesses characteristically that there is 'just one little point' still worrying him. Prot. had

<sup>1</sup> For S.'s own opinion of the Athenian democratic process see vol. III, 409 ff.

<sup>2</sup> This argument is repeated at *Meno* 93a-94e (where to Pericles are added the examples of Themistocles, Aristides and Thucydides) and *Alc. I* 118d-119a. Adkins protests (*JHS* 1973, 4) that S. has only demonstrated that ἀρετή is not taught, not that it is not teachable. But in his view the first, not unreasonably, implied the second. See *Meno* 89d-e, 96b-c.

<sup>3</sup> ἐπιδείξω, 320c, ἐπιδειξάμενος 328b. For these Sophistic displays of eloquence, see vol. III, 41 f.

<sup>4</sup> For a fuller account of Prot.'s speech and its significance see vol. III, 63-8, 255 f.

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spoken of justice, piety, self-control and so on as if they all made up one thing, virtue. What is his view on this? Is virtue a single whole, with the individual virtues as parts of it, or are the latter just different names for the same thing? Prot. thinks that they are all parts of one whole,<sup>1</sup> virtue, but differ from each other, like the parts of a face not those of a lump of gold. S. (whose conviction, as we know, is that they are all reducible to one thing, knowledge of what is good – or beneficial – and what is not) takes first the pair justice and piety. He argues that if these exist (which Prot. agrees they do), justice cannot be unjust nor piety impious, therefore justice is just and piety pious. If they differ, then piety will not be just, i.e. it will be unjust. This cannot be true, therefore justice and piety are either the same thing or closely alike. Prot. thinks it is not so simple, though doubtless there is *some* resemblance, as there is even between contraries like black and white.<sup>2</sup> S. is surprised at his answer, but assuming that this line of thought does not appeal to him, tries another tack. To show that another pair of virtues, wisdom and self-control, are identical, he gets Prot. to admit that one thing can have only one contrary and then traps him into saying that folly is the contrary of both. Without pause he starts on the relationship between justice and self-control (or however we translate *sophrosynē*, pp. 156 f. above). Can a wrongdoer be said to employ this virtue? Prot. thinks not, though many people believe it. With difficulty S. persuades him to answer not for himself but for these many, but he is getting restive, and when asked whether he equates 'good' with 'useful to men', takes the chance to make a little speech on one of his favourite topics, the relativity of the concept of goodness.<sup>3</sup> S. objects that he can only continue the discussion on the basis of brief questions and answers, and adds that in any case he must be going. The debate is only saved by the intervention of Callias, Alcibiades, Critias, Prodicus and Hippias, an interlude which Plato uses to give entertaining imitations of the style of the two Sophists.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> μόριον was used both for the parts of a physical whole like a face, and for the species of a genus (Arist. *Metaph.* 1023b 17), as also at *Euthyphro* 12c, *Gorg.* 462e, 463b *et al.*

<sup>2</sup> Or hard and soft; presumably in that both are colours or tactile sensa.

<sup>3</sup> The speech is translated and commented on in vol. III, 166–9.

<sup>4</sup> The theme of Hippias's speech is the superiority of *physis* to *nomos*, and the natural affinity

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Eventually Prot. is persuaded, against his will, to resume the method of question and answer but with himself replacing S. as the questioner. When he has put all his questions it will be S.'s turn again. His proposal is to approach the nature of virtue by asking questions on a poem of Simonides, the moral exegesis of poetry being, as we know, a common practice of the Sophists. After a few exchanges S., the abhorrer of long speeches, offers to expound his own interpretation of the poet's meaning, and encouraged by all three Sophists launches out into a long and ingenious parody of a Sophistic *epideixis*, which is gravely approved by Hippias but thoroughly distorts the poem's meaning and does nothing to further the main argument. He then pleads that they leave this sort of thing (which he compares with substituting cabaret entertainment for serious conversation after dinner) and use their own minds and his own method of the 'common search'.

Left to take the lead again, he asks Prot. to repeat his view of the virtues. He replies that they are parts of virtue, most of them quite alike but one – courage – very different, for a man can be outstandingly brave yet utterly unjust, impious, licentious and stupid. Well, men, they agree, may be bold either through having knowledge (as trained soldiers fight more bravely than untrained) or in ignorance of what they have to face. Only the former have the virtue of courage, for virtue must be something good (p. 165 above), and those who rush ignorantly into dangers are fools.<sup>1</sup> Hence it is knowledge which turns mere rashness into courage, which means that the element of courage in an act is in fact knowledge. Prot. objects that S.'s argument has been fallacious, and without attempting a defence S. abruptly makes a fresh start.

He suggests that whatever is pleasant is in itself (apart from any consequences) good, in fact pleasure itself is good. Prot. thinks this a dangerous doctrine, but agrees to investigate it. Surprisingly perhaps (but as his words make clear, out of professional pride) he accepts at once the full Socratic view that knowledge is sovereign, and a

of those whom *nomos* divides, for which see vol. III, 162, 118–20. Prodicus shows his zeal for making fine distinctions between words loosely used as synonyms, *ib.* 222.

<sup>1</sup> For the relation of this to *Laches* 193c, see p. 128 n. 1 above.

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knowledge of good and evil sufficient guarantee that a man will never be induced by pleasure, pain, passion etc. to follow any other course than what that knowledge dictates. Most people however believe the opposite, that a man may act wrongly with full knowledge of what he is doing, because overmastered by the lure of pleasure; and S. goes on, in both their names, to prove to 'the many', on their own admissions, that such behaviour always involves some ignorance about its full consequences. When they speak of wrongly yielding to pleasure, they really mean choosing an immediately pleasant course though it will result in future pain or deprivation of pleasure. Conversely, if they speak of painful or disagreeable experiences as good, they mean that they will be outweighed by pleasant results. As examples S. gives indulgence in food, drink and sex leading to physical debility and poverty, and painful surgical or medical treatment, hard training and military campaigns as leading to bodily well-being, the safety of one's country, empire, and wealth. The ultimate standard is solely the sum-total of pleasure and pain.

With so much granted, all that is needed to attain the popular ideal is the skill to draw up a balance sheet of pleasures and pains both present and future. This is a science, and lack of this science, i.e. of knowledge, is the sole explanation of what is known as being seduced by pleasure into acting wrongly. So far, the thesis that pleasure itself is good has been presented only as a conclusion from the views of 'the many', but since its corollary is that right living depends on knowledge, which (as S. does not fail to remind them) is a good advertisement for the Sophist's calling, Prodicus and Hippias, when the question is put directly to them, heartily agree with it themselves.

S. now returns to his main point, the proof that courage is the same thing as knowledge. Since, as is now agreed, pleasant equals good, and no one can be said to choose pleasure against his *better* judgement, no one will voluntarily choose a worse (that is, less pleasant) course instead of a better. Now fear is the expectation of evil, so if no one voluntarily goes to meet what he believes to be evil, no one goes to meet what he believes to be fearful. True, brave men go willingly to battle and cowards do not, but on our agreed assumptions this must be because the brave know that to enter battle

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is both better and pleasanter than to shirk it, and the cowards do not. Thus the thesis is proved, that courage is knowledge.

In conclusion, S. remarks that he and Prot. seem to have changed places. He, who did not think that virtue could be taught, has done his best to prove it to be knowledge, which, surely, is the proper object of teaching; whereas Prot., who claims that it is teachable, was reluctant to equate it with knowledge. They are confused, and the remedy is to consider first what virtue is, and only after that ask themselves how it is acquired. 'Another time', says Protagoras, and ends the conversation with some generous compliments on S.'s talent for philosophy.

### *Comment*

As a source of historical information on the Sophists, especially Protagoras himself, Hippias and Prodicus, and the intellectual atmosphere of the second half of the fifth century, the *Protagoras* has been treated in the previous volume. Here our concern is Plato and Plato's Socrates. Adam remarked (*Prot.* ix) that no Platonic dialogue is so full of fallacious reasoning, and none contains an ethical theory so difficult to reconcile with other Platonic teaching. Yet its authenticity has never been seriously questioned, because 'the extraordinary vivacity and power of the dramatic representation, as well as the charm of style, have furnished proofs of authenticity which even the most sceptical critics have been unable to resist'. Vignettes like those of the hypochondriac Prodicus, holding forth in a deep booming voice from under a pile of blankets on his bed in a converted store-room, and Hippias dispensing magisterial answers from his *thronos* to questions on astronomy and related sciences, are indeed memorable. In the earlier dialogues Socrates tackles his adversaries privately before or after their displays,<sup>1</sup> or talks to a few friends. Here he both listens to, and plays his part in, a full-dress performance by both the methods advertised by Protagoras and Gorgias – continuous declamation and question-and-answer<sup>2</sup> – before a large and distinguished audience. (Twenty of those present are mentioned by name, eight of

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *H. Maj.* 286a–c, *H. Min.* 363a–b, *Ion* 530d.

<sup>2</sup> *Prot.* 329b, 334e, *Gorg.* 447a–c.

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whom have speaking parts.) But to appreciate this 'power and charm' a reader must turn to the dialogue itself. In a bare summary, the dramatic element is only reflected, dimly, in the abrupt changes of ground, which are in fact due to Socrates's alertness to any signs of displeasure on the part of Protagoras, or tacit acknowledgement that his own argument has been proved faulty.

In the labyrinth of petty and sometimes fallacious argument through which Socrates leads Protagoras, our thread of Ariadne must be an awareness of what was in his mind, though never expressed: for him all virtue is essentially one, being reducible to wisdom or knowledge. It is Protagoras's attitude to this that he is all the time trying to elicit, while ostensibly starting from the question: 'Can virtue be taught?', and (as he says at the end) leaving aside the prior question of its essential nature. It emerges in a curiously sidelong way from the discussion of pleasure, but is not openly argued until the *Meno* (87c-89a).

*The identity of justice and piety* (329c-332a). Brushing aside the important lessons of Protagoras's speech, he concentrates on the fact that it sometimes mentioned virtue in general, sometimes separate virtues like justice, self-control and piety, and taking them first in pairs, tries to convince Protagoras that they are not simply different parts of a whole with different functions, as eyes, nose, mouth are parts of a face, but actually identical.<sup>1</sup> He does this by the typically Sophistic device of presenting an adversary with a crude 'either-or' alternative, which Plato himself satirizes in the *Euthydemus*, and by what is usually called a confusion of contradictories with contraries. Throughout the dialogue it is Protagoras who takes the reasonable view that life is not so simple, and does not present a series of clear-

<sup>1</sup> Vlastos argues (see *PS* 221 ff.) that the virtues are not identical to S. Courage is knowledge of what is to be dreaded or dared (*Laches* 194e), justice 'giving to another person what is due to him' (he cannot of course give a reference for this because it is not S.'s definition of δικαιοσύνη), and so with the other virtues. To say that all of them are knowledge is not to say that they are identical with it, but only that knowledge is descriptively predicated of them, as 'odd' is predicated of 'three'. But the *Laches* is not a happy example, for courage turns out at 199b-c to be not only knowledge of what is to be dreaded or feared but knowledge of all good and evil whatsoever, and so identical with virtue as a whole. As I see it, S.'s belief was that all the virtues were specific instances of the one form, virtue, definable as 'knowledge (of the good)', This single form was 'present' in them and was that 'by which' they were virtues (pp. 118 f. above).

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cut Eleatic alternatives. In admitting that justice and piety exist as 'things', Protagoras is not of course subscribing to any 'doctrine of Forms', but simply giving the answer of common sense.<sup>1</sup> His further admission, that justice is just and piety pious, in the same sense as their instances, is more questionable. Men and their acts are just, and this makes it natural (even if it raises philosophical difficulties) to say that there is some common quality – justice – which they all share; but whereas just or pious men earn the epithet by paying their debts, offering sacrifice and so on, one cannot say that justice or piety do any of these things. By doing them men *have* the characteristic; justice *is* the characteristic. This 'self-predication', and the difficulties into which it led Plato when the Forms had acquired for him an independent existence apart from their instances, have been mentioned already.<sup>2</sup> They did not trouble him when he promulgated this doctrine with religious ardour in the *Phaedo*, *Republic* and *Phaedrus*, but only in the period of critical reaction which followed; and since in the *Protagoras* we find as yet no sign of misgiving, we may be sure that at this stage, before he had thought out the full consequences, especially the ontological consequences, of the simple teaching of Socrates, he had not himself seen any objection to calling justice just and piety pious.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hippias makes the same answer at *H. Maj.* 287c. Cf. p. 115 above, Vlastos, *Prot.* liii n. 10, and Allen, *Euthyphro* 109: 'though the theory of Forms is indeed a metaphysical theory, it is essentially continuous with common sense'. Peck (*PhR* 1962, 173) aptly compares Prot.'s own language at 324d–325a. Cf. also Isocrates quoted on p. 189 n. 1 above.

<sup>2</sup> P. 119 above, where the influence of the common use of the adjectival form is noted. Taylor gives the particularly clear example of a pair (*PMW* 355), which is used by P. himself at *H. Maj.* 301d to show that things need not possess separately an attribute which they possess jointly (p. 182 above). Savan in *Phron.* 1964 defends S. on the ground that, seen in terms of the paradigm (the parts of a face), what he asserts is not self-predication but only 'that the δύναις of justice is just action, the δύναις of holiness is holy action', which is not self-predicative though it is analytic. Savan's reasoning is acute, yet this is not how S. puts the question when he asks (330c) τοῦτο τὸ πρᾶγμα... ἡ δικαιοσύνη, αὐτὸ τοῦτο δίκαιόν ἐστιν; True, the eye has the power of seeing (or more accurately, we see through the eyes as instruments, *Tht.* 184c), but it is not justice, but a man, that has the power of acting justly. Justice *is* that power, and to say that a form has itself the characteristic, or the δύναις, which it imparts to particulars is what is meant by self-predication. The eye sees because it has the power of sight: one would not say that sight sees. Crombie, in *CR* 1966, 311, makes another attempt to deny self-predication here, but it leaves me in doubt at least.

<sup>3</sup> In a challenging paper (*l.c.*, p. 222 n. 1) Vlastos has queried the whole basis of the assumption of self-predication in Plato, accepted and discussed by many, including himself in 1954 and later. I had intended to offer a note on his new conception of the Forms, but having



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With so much agreed, Socrates argues that on Protagoras's view that the two are different, piety will not be just nor justice pious, and so justice will be impious and piety unjust, thus 'foisting on Protagoras the assumption that the disjunction is exhaustive' (Vlastos, *PS* 249 n. 76). Some commentators argue that Plato must have been aware of the fallacy here because elsewhere (and not only in the late *Sophist*) he notes that a thing need not be either  $x$  or its contrary because it may be at an intermediate point on the same scale, as Eros is neither beautiful nor ugly but somewhere between the two.<sup>1</sup> So grey is between black and white, or Laodicean between hot and cold. The point is made more than once in this very dialogue, as when Socrates says at 346d that there are intermediates between black and white and Protagoras at 351d that there are painful experiences which are neither good nor bad.

Here however the mistake lies not in ignoring the possibility of a mean between two extremes, but in assuming that things not on the same scale at all are mutually exclusive. One would not describe playing billiards or listening to music as just acts, but neither are they unjust. They simply belong to a different category.<sup>2</sup> What Socrates

seen its contents Professor Vlastos assures me that I have misunderstood him. I am very willing to believe that this is so, and will therefore refer the reader to his exposition and trust that further discussion between us will enable me to understand it better. He has amplified his new conception, which he calls 'Pauline predication' (referring to the concept of love in I Cor. 13), in another essay in the same collection (pp. 270-322) and in *Phron.* 1974, 95-101. Here I will only repeat my point that to say 'There is such a thing as justice' is natural to most of us, and if anyone exclaims, 'There's no justice in the world!', he does not mean that no such thing exists. On the contrary it exists and he knows very well what it is, but, regretably, has met no instances of it. Justice in Greek eyes was among other things a goddess, and though we may not believe in the blindfolded lady with the scales whose image adorns the Old Bailey, she is the product of a habit of mind which still persists.

<sup>1</sup> *Symp.* 201e, cited by Adam *ad loc.* Intermediates are also adduced as relevant by Savan, *Phron.* 1964, 134. Further reff. for this distinction are listed by O'Brien, *Socr. Parad.* 132 n. 9. Note that at *Rep.* 491d for instance (ἀγαθὸν γὰρ που κακὸν ἐναντιώτερον ἢ τῷ μὴ ἀγαθῷ) does not mean 'evil is more nearly contrary to good than the not-good [i.e. indifferent] is'. P.'s message there is *corruptio optimi pessima*. A brilliantly gifted *man*, if subjected to bad upbringing or influences, does more evil than a less gifted one, and he cites the analogy of plants and animals reared under unsuitable conditions. The words mean 'Evil is a worse enemy to the good than to the not-good', 'good' having a concrete reference to plants, animals and men.

<sup>2</sup> As an example within the moral sphere itself, cf. Vlastos's of an act of spontaneous generosity (*SP* 249f. n. 79). The point is taken by Aristotle when at *Phys.* 188a 36 he distinguishes black and the intermediate colours, taken together, from the whole field of the non-white, which includes e.g. the musical.

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says is not parallel to saying that whoever is not wise must be foolish, overlooking the fact that most men are not outstandingly either. It is like saying that whoever is wise must be impatient because wisdom and patience are different things, or on the same argument what is white cannot be triangular. A man cannot be just and unjust, but he can perfectly well be just and black, or tired, or young, because blackness, tiredness or youth, though not the same as justice, are not incompatible with it. Neither is piety, and that is the point that is here ignored. That Plato himself, like his commentators, did not distinguish a mean between two extremes (black, white, grey) from something which in itself is neither because outside their range, appears from *Gorg.* 467e. There as examples of what is between (μεταξύ) good and bad he gives sitting, walking, running, stones and wood, on the grounds that they are sometimes one or the other, sometimes neither. Yet surely the difference is real and important. An intermediate like greyness cannot be either of the extremes; what by itself bears no relation to the extremes can, by the addition of circumstances or motive, become either (running to save a drowning man, running to commit a murder; running leading to health, running leading to a heart attack).

The weakness would tend to be concealed from Plato by the habit of reifying concepts, a natural Greek tendency which was intensified by Socratic teaching and led Plato to his belief in independently existing Forms. We might say (pedantically) that a man can be both pious and not-pious, as a way of putting the point that he can possess other attributes besides his piety; but Plato asks whether the 'thing', piety, can be both pious and not-pious.<sup>1</sup> The relation of one object to its many attributes was still a live question in Plato's day,<sup>2</sup> and when, in the *Sophist*, he came to analyse the difference between contrary opposition and mere otherness, he had to do it in the elaborate terms of the theory of Forms. 'Motion' and 'being' are different Forms, but they can 'combine' in a particular,

<sup>1</sup> With πράγμα here cf. τὸ εἶδος ᾧ πάντα τὰ ὄντα ὄντα ἐστίν, *Euthyphro* 6d (pp. 118f. and 179 above).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 119 n. 1 above. Not till the *Phil.* (14c-e) can he dismiss it as trivial, as a result of his own earlier work, e.g. at *Phaedo* 103a-b.

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whereas 'motion' and 'rest' cannot. That is why a thing can both exist and be in motion, but cannot be both moving and at rest. All that was in the future. How far he was deliberately allowing Socrates to argue fallaciously here may never be known.<sup>1</sup> I suspect that he had an idea it must be wrong to equate 'not-just' with 'unjust', but could not as yet explain why, and was not above allowing Socrates to make a genuine point (the unity of virtue) by dubious means among others. The argument is never squarely met, though Protagoras does raise the different points that otherness does not exclude all similarity and even contraries have something in common, and the section is broken off abruptly and inconclusively. There is a similar abrupt transition after Protagoras has accused Socrates of a fallacy at 350c-d, though both there and in the *Euthyphro* (pp. 113f. above) Plato shows himself aware of it.

*The identification of wisdom and self-control (332a-333b).* This section too is beset by the Socratic insistence on arguing everything in terms of abstract nouns. We do not normally ask for agreement to the statements that it is by self-control that the self-controlled are self-controlled, that to be performed weakly an act must be performed with weakness, and that in general acts done in the same manner are done by the corresponding agency (332a-c). The dogma that one thing can have only one contrary is established by means of a few instances (fair-foul, good-bad, high-low), that is, by the elementary Socratic type of induction.<sup>2</sup> Nor could Socrates well have made his point if he had had in mind that the non- $x$  need not be the contrary of  $x$  but may either be at an intermediate point on the same scale or belong to an entirely different category. The argument is not worth much reflection, nor does he allow Protagoras to reflect upon it. 'No

<sup>1</sup> I say 'how far' rather than 'whether', bearing in mind a point of R. Robinson's (*Essays* 27f.): 'a given man's awareness of any given conception can vary indefinitely in degree. There is no such thing as a complete grasp of an idea; and there is no such thing as a zero grasp of an idea.'

<sup>2</sup> For this see vol. III, 425-30. Vlastos criticizes its use here in his *Prot.* p. xxix n. 18, though what is there quoted about intuitive induction seems doubtful. Any inductive inference other than by complete enumeration must, one would have thought, so far as it is regarded as valid, depend on intuition (vol. III, 427f.). On the argument 'one thing one opposite' see O'Brien, *Socr. Parad.* 132 n. 19. S.'s reasoning here has been defended by D. Savan, who is criticized by D. P. Gauthier in *J.H.Ph.* 1968.

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letting up', he says, and passes at once to the next pair, justice and self-control (333b), but his argument for their identity hardly gets started before Protagoras's exasperation at being asked to assume for its sake something that he does not himself believe leads to his outburst on the relativity of the concept 'good' and so to a quarrel.

*The Simonides episode (339a-347a).* When this is patched up, and Protagoras turns the discussion to Simonides, Socrates, who sees no point in taking moral lessons from a poet instead of working them out for oneself, feels entitled to treat the subject with outrageous levity. Here at least there can be no doubt that Plato knew what he was doing, and it is splendid entertainment, but hardly philosophy.<sup>1</sup> He appeals to Prodicus to confirm that when Simonides says 'hard' he means 'bad', and when Protagoras replies hotly that he means 'difficult', turns round and says that is his opinion too, and Prodicus must have been joking. Finally he gives a comic Sophistic *epideixis* on the poem, in which among other things he maintains that the Spartans are the most cultured and philosophical of the Greeks, and their apparent lack of intellectual interests and addiction to militarism and the more brutal sports are an elaborate disguise (342a-d); and by violently wrenching a word from its proper connexions in the sentence claims to find in Simonides his own conviction that no one willingly does wrong (345 d).

*The argument that courage is knowledge (349d-351b).* Compelled to return to the main argument, Protagoras admits that the other virtues are very similar, but insists that courage is something quite different: a man may be outstandingly brave yet wicked, depraved and stupid. This therefore presents the greatest obstacle to Socrates in his

<sup>1</sup> It cannot be dealt with in detail here. Cf. Crombie, *EPD* 1, 234: 'The purpose of this passage (apart from comedy-value) is probably to show that, as Socrates says, you can make a poem mean anything you like, with the implication, perhaps, that reliance on poetry as a means of education is misguided.' Those interested in the episode will find the following helpful: H. Gundert, 'Die Simonides-Interpr. in P.'s Prot.', *Ermeneia* 1952; L. Woodbury, 'S. on ἀρετή', *TAPA* 1953; Adkins, *M. and R.* (1960), App. on 'The Scopas-fr. of Simon.', pp. 355-9; Pfeiffer, *Hist. Class. Schol.* 1 (1968), 32-4; des Places, 'Simon. et Socr. dans le Prot. de P.', *Les Ét. Cl.* 1969. For the reconstructed text of the fr. see Adam's *Prot.* p. 198, which only differs in minor points from Diehl (*Anth. Lyr.* II, 62-6), Bowra etc.

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endeavour to show that all the virtues coalesce in being knowledge. His argument amounts to this:<sup>1</sup> Men may be confident (bold, daring) either as a result of knowledge (of the risks and the best way of meeting them) or in ignorance. If courage is a virtue, the latter cannot be called courageous, only foolish. Hence what turns the confidence into courage is knowledge. We have met this in the *Laches* (p. 132), and it is restated in the *Meno* (87d, 88b). Virtue is essentially good (*agathon*; at *Prot.* 349e it is *kalon*), which means beneficial, but if courage is not wisdom but an ignorant and thoughtless rashness, it may be harmful. (For an example see p. 128 n. 1 *ad fin.*) Only when accompanied by knowledge is it always beneficial. This is true of all the other separate virtues: in each case it is the presence of knowledge which ensures that the so-called virtuous activity will be good and beneficial, therefore virtue is knowledge. Most people would see a fallacy here, for all that has been proved is that knowledge must be an ingredient of virtue, not that *per se* it is virtue itself and sufficient to ensure right action. Socratic teaching must be taken as a whole, including the part which Aristotle thought 'in flagrant contradiction to experience',<sup>2</sup> namely that if one knows the right course one will inevitably choose and follow it. The argument is put very briefly in the *Meno*, probably because Plato had the results of the *Laches* and *Protagoras* behind him, including the final conclusion (360d) that 'knowledge of what is and what is not fearful is courage', broadened in *Laches* (199c) to the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam (p. 173) criticized the argument first on the grounds that there are not necessarily only two classes of confidence, that based on knowledge and that based on ignorance. Thus granted that brave men are bold, and not ignorantly bold, it does not necessarily follow that they are bold with knowledge. He appears to be making the same confusion as he did over the assumption that non-just = unjust, to which he refers as showing that 'the assumption [of only two classes of confidence] would be to Socrates a natural one'. Of course there

<sup>1</sup> For further comment and criticism see vol. III, 452f.; Crombie, *EPD* I, 234f.; Sullivan, *Phron.* 1961, 17f.; Vlastos, *Prot.* xxxi-xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> Or more likely 'to common belief', as Owen claims (*A. et les Probl. de M  th.* 85f. on *EN* 1145b27). The 'virtue is knowledge' thesis, and Aristotle's criticisms of it, are fully discussed in vol. III, 450ff.

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can be degrees between full knowledge and complete ignorance, but that does not invalidate the argument. Socrates nowhere denies that there are degrees of courage. For this criticism to be effective there would have to be a class of confidence to which the antithesis 'informed' or 'ignorant' does not apply, as in arguing against a man who said that there is no other colour besides white or black one would not point to shades of grey, which are a mixture of black and white, but to red or green.<sup>1</sup>

Protagoras now sees that he has been tricked into the appearance of admitting that all the confident are courageous, when all he originally said was that all the courageous are confident. He seems to think it makes a great difference, but one may fairly make three comments:

(1) When asked if he would describe the courageous as confident he simply replied 'Yes, and keen to meet dangers from which most men shrink in fear.' He made no reservations, and would not have thought of the distinction between courage and unthinking confidence if Socrates had not put it into his head. It is Socrates who points out that not all the confident are brave (350c1).

(2) In unguardedly admitting the equation in the form put to

<sup>1</sup> Adam's next charge, of illicit conversion, requires reference to the Greek: even if S. has proved that all brave men have knowledge, he has not proved that all with knowledge are brave, which he says is S.'s conclusion. It is true that P. makes him conclude (350c4): καὶ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἡ σοφία ἂν ἀνδρεία εἴη, where the 'position of the article before σοφία makes it natural to translate 'on this argument knowledge would be courage'. If this is so (though in other cases P. can be detected using the article inconsistently; see Stallbaum on *H. Maj.* 293e), I should say it is only a slip on P.'s part. All he wants S. to show is that all courage is knowledge. The converse does not follow from his argument, but his present purpose does not require that it should, nor did either S. or P. believe it. The feeling that he would accept the correction without embarrassment, as not affecting the main argument, seems justified when the opponent apparently takes S. to mean only what he obviously intended to say, namely that courage is knowledge.

It may even be that in the offending sentence ἡ σοφία ἂν ἀνδρεία εἴη there is no actual mistake, though it lays itself open to misunderstanding. By ἡ σοφία P. may have meant, not knowledge in general, but the knowledge involved in the particular brave act. Adding the article in English gives the necessary correction: in particular cases (e.g. diving, cavalry charges) only the trained and knowledgeable exhibit true courage, therefore 'it is the knowledge which is courage', and not the boldness which they also show. Prot. himself seems to take S. to have meant no more than this when he says (350d6) that by a similar argument you could prove τὴν ἰσχὺν εἶναι σοφίαν, *not* τὴν σοφίαν εἶναι ἰσχύν. But in fact he has got so confused that at the conclusion of this demonstration he says (350e4-6) that by it you could show that ἡ σοφία ἐστὶν ἰσχὺς. So he at any rate is in no position to quarrel about non-convertible propositions. In the *Meno*, where the complications of trying to outwit a master-Sophist are absent, the articles are correctly allotted: 88b εἰ μὴ ἐστὶ φρόνησις ἡ ἀνδρεία and 88d τὴν ἀρετὴν φρόνησιν δεῖ τιν' εἶναι.

him by Socrates at 350b7 with the article before 'confident' ('Do you not say of the courageous that they are *the* confident?'), he has committed himself to the proposition in its convertible form.<sup>1</sup>

(3) As already stated, Socrates's real conclusion does not depend on the conversion of the non-convertible proposition. All he wants to say is that all courage is knowledge, not vice versa, and in fact he has only succeeded in demonstrating this by pointing out that confidence and courage are not coterminous but confidence is a genus of which courage is only one of two species.

The argument adduced by Protagoras as a *reductio ad absurdum* of Socrates's, which he says would prove physical strength to be knowledge, is as follows (350d-e): The strong are powerful,<sup>2</sup> trained wrestlers are more powerful than untrained, therefore their power, i.e. their strength, lies in the knowledge gained by training, and strength is knowledge. This, as he says, would only be valid on the assumption that not only all strong men are powerful but all powerful men are strong. But it is a travesty of Socrates's argument because it leaves out the essential step taken in 350b1-c2: 'But the ignorant may also be bold, therefore some bold men are not brave.' In terms of the new example this is: But the ignorant may also be powerful (e.g. in madness or rage, though normally weak in body), therefore some powerful men are not strong.<sup>3</sup> Protagoras leaves this out and then charges the omission to Socrates as a weakness. It is he who has introduced the fallacy of converting a universal affirmative proposition, and then foisted it on Socrates.<sup>4</sup> Whether Socrates is supposed to

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators think the article does not make the relationship one of identity. For these, and for evidence that it does, see M. J. O'Brien in *TAPA* 1961, 411-13. (I see no justification for expunging it with Sauppe.)

<sup>2</sup> The word for 'strength' (τοχύς) referred primarily to bodily strength; that rendered 'powerful' (δυνατός) meant having the capacity or ability to attain an end usually indicated by the context (running, wrestling, speaking, persuading, ruling and so on).

<sup>3</sup> Rosamond Sprague (*PUF* 96) claims that this argument is 'precisely similar in structure' to S.'s, and to demonstrate this sets out the steps of each side by side. She includes 'some powerful men are not strong', with a footnote to say that it is not in the text but added for the sake of filling out the scheme! I agree rather with Crombie (*EPD* 1, 235) that Protagoras 'goes on to make up a bad argument which he says is parallel to Socrates', though in fact it is much worse'.

<sup>4</sup> At 350b6 S. did not himself equate courageous and confident, even in his stock form of a *nonne* question which really amounts to a positive statement. He said: 'What are you saying about the brave? Is it not that they are the confident?' Protagoras replies: 'Yes, I stick to that.'

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be aware of this I should not like to say, but at any rate the two have got into a state of rare confusion, and seeing no way out of it he does what he has done before: he simply drops this line of argument and abruptly starts another.

*Pleasure and goodness (351b–357e): Socrates a hedonist?* This is the famous ‘argument for hedonism’ which has led to so much controversy. Three main views have been thought possible.<sup>1</sup>

(1) (a) Socrates advocates a ‘vulgar hedonism’ such as he fiercely combats in the *Gorgias*, so that there is a direct contradiction between the two dialogues: he is ‘a Socrates who can prove that “virtue is knowledge” only on a hedonist assumption which is plainly incompatible with the ethical standpoint of the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*’ (Dodds, *Gorg.* 21). This is untenable, as had been pointed out by Ritter (*Essence* 59f.). The qualifications introduced in the *Protagoras* make the ‘hedonism’ there advocated utterly different from the crude view advanced by Callicles in the *Gorgias*, where there is no mention of forethought and the ‘art of measurement’. The hedonistic calculus of Socrates necessitates a large measure of self-control, whereas Callicles claims that ‘to live rightly is to let the appetites grow as large as possible and not check them, but have the courage and intelligence to minister to them and satisfy each desire as it comes’.<sup>2</sup>

(b) Different in emphasis, but essentially the same, is the view that the passage represents the genuine Socratic and Platonic position at the time when the dialogue was written. This was strongly upheld by Grote, and in a modified form by Hackforth. Plato, says the latter, ‘is making a serious attempt to understand for himself, and explain to his readers, what the Socratic equation [i.e. of virtue with knowledge] really meant’. Socrates himself had stopped short of a criterion for distinguishing an apparent from a real good. Plato’s first attempt at an answer is psychological hedonism. By the time he wrote the *Gorgias* he had advanced beyond it. Thus Hackforth (and Dodds

<sup>1</sup> For fuller ref. to the modern debate see Friedländer, *Pl.* II, 302 n. 24; Sullivan, *Phron.* 1961, notes to pp. 10ff. H. G. Wolz, ‘Hedonism in the *Prot.*’, in *JHPH.* 1967 is a reply to A. Sesonske on the same subject in 1963.

<sup>2</sup> *Gorg.* 491e–492a. Note especially ἀποτιμπλάναι ὧν ἂν αἰεὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία γίγνηται. For fuller comparison between the standpoints of *Prot.* and *Gorg.* see pp. 302–5 below.



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who follows him) also saw the ethic of the *Protagoras* as inconsistent with that of the *Gorgias*.<sup>1</sup> Apart from this, there is much to be said for his view, which accords with some remarks made here in connexion with the *Charmides* (pp. 173 f. above). In particular it takes account of the fact, so often overlooked, that it is Socrates alone who argues the others into saying that all pleasures are good. Both Protagoras and 'the many' maintain that there are good and bad pleasures until compelled to admit that their position does not conform to Socratic logic.

(2) This episode, like the whole dialogue, is written *ad hominem*, in an attack on Protagoras and more generally on Sophistic standards of morality, which are entirely on the conventional level: Socrates does not himself believe in the premise on which he bases the proof of his own view that courage, and virtue generally, is knowledge.<sup>2</sup> That Protagoras's ethic started from accepted beliefs is clear from his account of the acquisition of civic virtue by parental training, schooling, the teaching of the law and contact with one's fellow-citizens; but these were interpreted in the light of a genuine philosophy of his own which Plato by no means despised.<sup>3</sup> That the dialogue was inspired throughout by hostility is refuted, if in a somewhat back-handed way, by Grote, who was no fool, yet believed that the ethic of the hedonistic calculus here set forth was genuinely Socratic, and considered it inferior to that of Protagoras, *taking his evidence for the latter from Plato himself*.<sup>4</sup>

(3) The third view is the one which I myself proposed in the introduction to the Penguin translation of the dialogue, and to which I still incline. Socrates is arguing from the Sophist's own premises, his principles of relativism, empiricism and the *ad hoc* in conduct as well as theory, illustrated in this dialogue by his little harangue on the relativity of the concept 'good' (334a-c). But Plato's motive is not (as in the previous explanation) to attack them openly but actually

<sup>1</sup> Grote, *Pl.* II, ch. xxi; Hackforth in *CQ* 1928; Dodds, *G. and I.* 198 n. 33.

<sup>2</sup> This is the thesis of Sullivan's article in *Phron.* 1961. Cf. also Kahn in *JPh* 1968, 369: 'The conclusion... is not that pleasure is the good: that is the premise or hypothesis, chosen in good dialectical fashion as a proposition acceptable to most men. The conclusion S. argues for is that courage, and more generally virtue, is knowledge.' (It is not in fact acceptable to most men: both Prot. and the many try to deny it.)

<sup>3</sup> I hope this has been shown in vol. III. For a summing-up see pp. 265-8.

<sup>4</sup> See especially his *Hist. of Greece*, VII, 61 f.

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to show them at their best. Protagoras was an opponent, but a worthy one, and to devote a dialogue to showing the strength rather than the weakness of the adversary was not wasted labour. He is not a friend or disciple, but a mature philosopher, 'old enough to be Socrates's father', with his opinions formed and hardened and a reputation to maintain. It would be no use putting before him the full paradoxical rigour of Socraticism. So Plato brings them together as guests in the house of a common friend, with other friends around to intervene if the talk threatens to become acrimonious. Socrates himself stops short whenever he sees Protagoras getting seriously annoyed (which accounts for the superficial incoherence of the dialogue), and Protagoras puts up with a lot of provocation, rightly protesting when protest is called for but never abusive. The contrast with the uninhibited insults exchanged in the *Gorgias* is striking, and shows that hostility is not Plato's mood here.<sup>1</sup> Of his disapproval of Sophistry, he has given clear warning in the introductory conversation with Hippocrates (who takes no part in the main dialogue), and he can now avoid a confrontation without fear of misunderstanding.

A logical outcome of the Sophists' teaching – though up to now they had been unaware of it – was a life lived according to the hedonistic calculus, the maximization of one's personal pleasure and satisfaction. Introduced as the opinion of the common man (who similarly has not realized that this is the logical outcome of his attitude), it is so presented that finally the Sophists agree it is their view too. But before they do that, Socrates has refined it so that 'pain' includes not only ill health and poverty but the shame one would feel at the knowledge that one was behaving like a coward, and 'pleasure' the satisfaction obtained from fighting to preserve the freedom of one's country.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning (351c1) he had rebuked Protagoras for

<sup>1</sup> This opinion inevitably has a subjective element. Sullivan (*l.c.* 11) says 'some commentators underrate the hostility', and agrees with Vlastos, who wrote that S.'s 'handling of Prot. is merciless if not cruel', and described him as delivering a mortal stab and making the victim himself give one more thrust to the knife (*Prot.* xxivf.). A reader must judge for himself, but I suspect that the famous agonistic champion (335a) was quite able to look after himself, and Sullivan has at least to admit that 'there is nothing like the attack on Callicles in the *Gorgias*'. Also a view like his must ignore the note on which the dialogue ends.

<sup>2</sup> We need not accuse S. of 'pitching his examples low' (see Vlastos in *Phoenix* 1969, 74f. with n. 15) because he adds 'and rule over others'. Neither he nor Plato escaped completely

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pandering to the popular view that to live pleasurably is only good 'if one takes pleasure in what is good and honourable' (τοῖς καλοῖς). But his own 'art of measurement' leads practically to the same reservation: one should pause before indulging in an immediate pleasure to work out whether it will increase the sum of satisfaction throughout the whole of life; and his conclusion amounts to saying that it will only do this if we exercise the virtue of self-control and find pleasure in what is good and honourable.

The morality of Protagoras, based on conventional premises, was admirable, and the outcome of much straight thinking about human nature and human affairs; but it differed from the Socratic in its conception of the *telos*, the ultimate end to be sought.<sup>1</sup> For the contrast we may look to *Phaedo* 69a, a passage still in purely Socratic vein<sup>2</sup> which puts in its proper place the 'art of measurement' as understood in the *Protagoras*. Virtue, says Socrates, is not to be bought by exchanging pleasures for pleasures and pains for pains, the greater for the less like coins.<sup>3</sup> The only genuine coinage, for which all these things must be exchanged, is wisdom. If this sounds vague, we know from many other places in Plato what it means. The wisdom which is virtue will ensure the well-being of the *psyche*, which alone matters, and it consists in recognizing that justice, courage and the rest all exist in an absolute form; that is, they are there to refer to as constant standards on which action should be based, rather than on the subjective and shifting standards of pleasure, pain or temporary expediency. Life, in simpler words, should be lived according to certain fixed principles. To live in that way, one must understand fully what those principles are. Hence Socrates's endless quest for definitions: What *is* courage? What *is* virtue? That question, only mentioned at the end of the *Protagoras*, is the genuinely Socratic

from their own world of warring city-states, and even in what is known as 'Plato's ideal state' one reason for the establishment of the guardian class is that to enjoy the benefits of civilization it will need to appropriate some of its neighbours' land (*Rep.* 373 d, p. 447 below).

<sup>1</sup> 'In the discussion itself there seems a calculated stress on the word τέλος; it becomes almost a refrain throughout the argument' (Sullivan, *Phron.* 1961, 27).

<sup>2</sup> I hope that after the account of S.'s philosophy in vol. III, this statement needs no further defence.

<sup>3</sup> If the many avoid certain indulgences, it is for fear of consequences like disease or poverty (353 d-e). At *Phaedo* 82c it is expressly denied that the philosopher's abstinence is motivated by this sort of consideration.

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one: not a series of *ad hoc* questions about how to act in different situations, but an inquiry into the existence and nature of unchanging moral principles.

With the identity of pleasure and goodness established, it is not difficult for Socrates to show that, 'on the agreed assumptions' as Protagoras says, courage can be reduced to knowledge. He makes agreement a little harder by omitting at this final stage any concrete examples to remind us of the thesis that in choosing a course of action the total amount of pleasure and pain, future as well as present, must be weighed up. Thus what the brave man sees is not merely the immediate hardship and risk but the choice between victory and defeat, freedom and subjection, or at the individual level, honour or self-respect and disgrace. In fact the point about present and future pleasures was passed over very hastily (356a5), and to say that in the presence of immediate pain or danger the one may be weighed against the other by a simple and unemotional act of intellectual judgement does not seem to show much psychological insight. Yet it was the genuine belief of the man who said 'Virtue is knowledge' and went to his execution in the faith that 'no evil can happen to a good man'. If he failed to appreciate the complexity of other men's characters, it was only because, so far as his own was concerned, there was none to be accounted for.

*Conclusion.* If we look to the *Protagoras* for philosophical lessons, it may seem an irritating patchwork of niggling argument, irrelevant digressions, false starts and downright fallacy. Read as a play in which the most outstanding and individual minds of a brilliant period meet and engage in a battle of wits, it will give a different impression. That is how it should be read. A serious discussion of the nature of virtue, and how it is acquired, must be left, as Protagoras said, for another occasion – and, we may add, for different company: it is not to be achieved in the competitive atmosphere of a public gathering of Sophists. And so we turn to the *Meno*.

(2) THE MENO

*Date.*<sup>1</sup> With the *Meno* we enter a new phase after the early Socratic dialogues and the *Protagoras*, and it has been plausibly held<sup>2</sup> that its introduction of Pythagorean themes (immortality, reincarnation, the kinship of nature, mathematics) was stimulated by Plato's first visit to Italy and Sicily in 387. Similar themes appear in the *Gorgias*, which most scholars put close to the *Meno* but before it (e.g. Dodds, *Gorg.* 43). Opinions are almost equally divided as to the priority of *Meno* to *Euthydemus*, but all would now agree that it precedes the central group of *Phaedo*, *Republic*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*.<sup>3</sup> Its absolute date has been variously assigned between 386 and 382.<sup>4</sup>

*Dramatic date.* This may be taken to be 403 or early 402, after the restoration of the democracy, when Anytus was a leader of the party in power (cf. 90b) and there were political reasons why Meno should have visited Athens and stayed with Anytus.<sup>5</sup> (He is described as the latter's guest at 90b.) In the spring of 401 Meno joined the expedition of Cyrus, from which he did not return. The conversation, then, is supposed to take place some thirty years after that in the *Protagoras*. The prosecution of Socrates by Anytus and others is not far off, which adds dramatic force to the words of Anytus at 94e, and of Socrates at the end of the dialogue.

*Scene and characters.* The locality of the conversation is not specified, but since Meno is in Athens as the guest of Anytus, and Anytus himself casually joins the other two in the middle of their talk (89e),

<sup>1</sup> See in general Bluck's ed. 108–20.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. by Nestle (*Prot.* 44) and Bluck 115f. Morrison on the other hand (*CQ* 1964, 42f.) has maintained that *Meno*, *Gorg.* and even *Phaedo* were written before the first Italian journey, and reflect contact with the scattered Pythagorean communities on the Greek mainland.

<sup>3</sup> Thompson in 1901 (*Meno* liii) put it after *Phaedrus*, but before the rest.

<sup>4</sup> On historical allusions in the dialogue, see Bluck *l.c.* and the elaborate article by Morrison on the historical background in *CQ* 1942. Their slipperiness as a basis for dating is illustrated by the fact that according to Treves (*RE* XLII. Halbb. 1742) the mention of Ismenias at 90a shows the *M.* to have been written before his execution in 382, whereas Croiset (Budé ed. 231) believed that Plato would not have thought of him unless his execution had been in the recent past.

<sup>5</sup> For details see Bluck 120–2, and Morrison's 1942 article on which he depends.

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we may guess it to be at his house.<sup>1</sup> Of Anytus nothing further need be said here.<sup>2</sup> Meno is a rich Thessalian aristocrat (he has brought many attendants with him, 82a), young, handsome, vain and imperious as the dialogue shows: indeed Socrates's twitting of him on these points is one of its more entertaining features. But he has met Gorgias and been dazzled by his brilliance, and is now fascinated by the fashionable Sophistic topics. Above all, as an ambitious youth, he wants to know how *aretē* is acquired, that elusive quality which makes all the difference between success and failure. Some Sophists claim to teach it, but Gorgias laughs at them (95c). What does Socrates think? In fact Meno's life was to be cut short before he could profit by the answer. Xenophon in the *Anabasis* gives him a very bad character, but may have been influenced by his own admiration for the Greek leader Clearchus, Meno's bitter enemy.<sup>3</sup>

### *The dialogue* (*Direct dramatic form*)

Meno puts to Socrates the urgent question: Can virtue be taught, or is it a matter of practice, or a natural gift, or what?<sup>4</sup> S. surprises him by replying that he does not even know what it is, much less how to acquire it. M., as Gorgias's pupil (vol. III, 253f.), can tell him: the virtue of a man is  $x$ , of a woman  $y$ , of a slave  $z$  and so on. There is a virtue for every age and every occupation. S. objects that what they need is not a list of different virtues but the common form or

<sup>1</sup> I do not see why this should be 'most unlikely', as Bluck (120) and others have believed. It is at least more probable than the fanciful speculations of Bluck about Anytus being nearby all the time (in a gymnasium) but out of earshot. Grube (*P.'s Th.* 231 n. 2) thought his opportune entry 'probably the worst piece of dramatic technique in Plato', and Wilamowitz (*Pl.* I, 279), who guessed the scene to be a gymnasium, stigmatized it as 'wenig künstlerisch'. But if it were A.'s own home, these criticisms vanish. That it is probably out of doors proves nothing, and Croiset's objection (Budé 231) is equally pointless.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. III, 381. Easily accessible accounts of him are in the editions of Thompson (xxi-xxiv) and Bluck (126-8).

<sup>3</sup> See further Thompson xii-xx, Bluck 122-6. The individual character of M. is made to emerge skilfully and delightfully from the conversation, and it is difficult to understand the blindness of Wilamowitz in saying that 'Platon charakterisiert den Menschen überhaupt nicht', or of Bluck (125) in quoting and following him. M. is no 'type' figure.

<sup>4</sup> For the nature of *aretē* and contemporary views on the manner of its acquisition see vol. III, ch. x.

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character which makes them all alike examples of the same thing, virtue; just as in defining a natural species one would mention the specific characteristics rather than dwell on the fact that individuals within it differed in size or colour. Similarly health and strength have the same 'form' whether in man or woman. M. thinks the case of virtue is different, but when S. insists, suggests that it is simply 'the power to rule men'. S. makes him see that this again is only to mention one example, since it hardly covers the virtue of a child or a slave, and M. is conventional enough to agree that the rule must be just, 'for justice also is virtue'. After S. has helped him out with model definitions of shape and colour, which include the point that a definition must be offered in terms familiar to the listener, he tries again with 'to desire good things and be able to acquire them'. S. persuades him that everyone desires good things, so the virtue must lie in the power to get them. In answer to a question, M. reveals that by 'good things' he means health, riches, honour, power and the like, but these too must be acquired 'with justice', i.e. with something that is a part of the still undefined virtue, and we are back where we were.

M. now confesses himself baffled: S. has numbed his mind, like the sting-ray which he facially resembles. It must be, S. thinks, that his own ignorance is infectious. He does not know the answer himself, but wants to enlist M.'s help in seeking it. So far the dialogue has followed the course of an early Socratic one, ending in apparent failure but with many lessons of method instilled. But now the talk takes a new turn. M. raises what S. calls an eristic point: how can he look for something which he does not know? If he does not know the thing he is looking for, then if he comes across it, how will he recognize it, i.e. know that this is the thing which, *ex hypothesi*, he does not know? S. has heard this before, and restates it in a form which M. accepts: one cannot try to discover either what one knows or what one does not know. If one knows it there is no need to inquire, and if one does not, one does not even know what to look for.<sup>1</sup> S.'s riposte changes the whole character of the discussion and

<sup>1</sup> I cannot at all agree with J. Moline's attempt to upset the received interpretation of this passage (*Phron.* 1969). To mention only a few of his distortions, S. has not 'offered to coach' M. (p. 155), the last thing S. would ever claim to do! On the contrary, he asks for M.'s help (ἐθέλω μετὰ σοῦ σκέψασθαι, 80d), just as he does with Protagoras at *Prot.* 348c-349a (and

puts it on a different plane from any dialogues so far considered. It is an appeal to a doctrine of certain religious authorities and poets that the human soul is immortal, and having lived many lives alternating with periods in the beyond, has seen 'everything that there is' in both realms. Learning or discovery, therefore, is in reality only recovery, or recollection, of what we knew before. Since all reality (*physis*) is interrelated, the recollection of one thing may with appropriate effort lead to the recovery of all the rest.

M. would like evidence of this, and S. takes an ignorant slave of his and demonstrates how he can be led to give the correct solution to a geometrical problem without being told it, simply by being asked questions which, S. claims, do no more than elicit knowledge already latent in his mind. The way is now clear for a return to the question 'What is virtue?', but M. would prefer to go straight to his original problem of whether it can be taught. This seems to S. methodically wrong, but he suggests that they might proceed on a hypothesis: on what hypothesis about its nature will it be teachable? The answer is, if it is a form of knowledge, for only knowledge can be imparted by teaching. So, says S., the next thing is to find out whether or not it is knowledge. Virtue, they agree, is always good and can never bring one to harm. But things commonly regarded as good – health, wealth, even some spiritual qualities – are liable to misuse. Only right use can ensure that they produce benefit,<sup>1</sup> and this depends on knowledge or wisdom. This alone is invariably beneficial, therefore this alone is virtue.

So far so good, but is this theoretical conclusion confirmed by experience? If virtue can be taught, presumably there will be teachers of it, but are there? At this point Anytus enters, and the question is referred to him. He dismisses the Sophists with contumely, and

cf. *Laches* 189c, p. 131 above). There is no trace of sarcasm in M.'s questions, nor any evidence that he is doubting S.'s good faith (p. 156). Nor is there anything in the point that M.'s remark is not a paradox because it takes the form of three questions (p. 157). They are rhetorical questions which could be rephrased as statements without change of meaning ('you cannot' instead of 'how can you?'), and the argument is on the same level as that whereby Euthydemus and Dionysodorus 'prove' that neither those who know nor those who do not know can be learners (p. 269 below). For M.'s error as resting on a reduction of all knowledge to 'knowledge by acquaintance', see Ebert in *Man and World* 1973.

<sup>1</sup> This recurs at *Euthyd.* 280e–281b. That the argument was Socratic has been shown in vol. III, 463 ff. It may have been suggested to him by Prodicus. See [Pl.] *Eryxias* 397e.



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recommends that M. should turn to any leading Athenian for advice. When S. makes the same point as in the *Protagoras* (319e), that leading Athenians have not succeeded in imparting their virtue even to their own sons, A. accuses him of blackening their memory, and departs in dudgeon.<sup>1</sup>

Left to themselves, S. and M. agree that there is much confusion on the subject, and the claim of the Sophists to teach virtue is at least doubtful.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps they were wrong in thinking that only knowledge invariably leads to correct practice. What about a true belief? So long as one possesses it, it is as good a guide to action as knowledge. The difference is that true belief is something taken on trust, as when one is correctly told the way to a place to which one has never been. The man with knowledge is like the man who has been over every inch of the road himself.<sup>3</sup> It is obtained by 'working out the reason', knowing not only *that* something is true but *why* it is (which in fact, as S. reminds M., is the process of recollection). The drawback of true belief is its instability; the man who has been told the right way to Larissa may meet someone else who tells him differently, find him the more persuasive, and go astray. Nor can it be satisfactorily communicated as knowledge can. Such is the virtue of our statesmen, a kind of instinct, intuition or gift from heaven like that of prophets, not obtained by taking thought, nor acquired by teaching or natural ability. But if ever there should be a statesman capable of making others like himself, he indeed would possess wisdom and stand out like a real man among unsubstantial phantoms.

That must be our present conclusion, but the truth will only appear if, before asking how virtue is acquired, we try to find out what it is in and by itself.

<sup>1</sup> We are probably meant to think of him as taking S.'s remarks personally. There was a contemporary story (Xen. *Ap.* 29–31) that S. had criticized him for bringing up his son to his own trade of tanning, and prophesied that unless the boy's talents were given wider scope he would come to a bad end; which he did, through taking to drink.

<sup>2</sup> Considering the *Prot.*, it is surprising to find the Sophist's claim to teach virtue dismissed so lightly. This is probably one reason why Meno was chosen as respondent, the pupil of Gorgias who ridiculed the claim (95c). For Plato the omission must be dramatically plausible.

<sup>3</sup> The example of the road to Larissa (97a–b) is of course only an illustrative analogy (and a good one). Nothing is to be inferred from it as to the nature of the objects of knowledge as opposed to those of opinion. This seems to me both true and important, though some (e.g. Rist in *Phoenix* 1967, 284) think differently.

# *The Meno*

## *Comment*

*Breaking new ground.* The *Meno* has been described as a microcosm of the whole series of Plato's dialogues. Those before it are ostensibly negative and destructive, those after it constructive. In the *Meno* the Socratic elenchus first proceeds to its destructive conclusion, and we are then shown how this purging of the false conceit of knowledge was the necessary preliminary to a positive search for it with some hope of success. Philosophical method and the nature of knowledge are leading themes, and Socrates appears as one ready to state and prove a positive doctrine about them. One might even claim to detect the very moment when Plato first deliberately goes beyond the historic Socrates to provide for his teaching a philosophic basis of his own. It would be at 81a, where Socrates declares with unwonted solemnity that he can rebut the eristic denial that learning is possible by an appeal to religious beliefs.

*The aretē of a Meno.* The theme is that of the *Protagoras*: Can *aretē* be taught? And we cannot remind ourselves too often what this word, which we translate 'virtue', meant in the mouth of an ambitious youth like Meno. It is 'the kind of skill and virtue which fits men to manage an estate or govern a city, to look after their parents and to entertain and send off guests in proper style'.<sup>1</sup> Meno's first attempt at a definition of it is 'the ability to govern' (73c).<sup>2</sup>

*Argument in character.* The first main section, down to Meno's complaint of mental impotence at 80a-b, illustrates Plato's extraordinary skill in intertwining matters of method and content. To the confusion of some of his commentators, he did not write one treatise on logic and another on ethics: he wrote genuine dialogues, in which the ability to grasp an apparent point of method is affected, not simply by the intelligence of the parties but by their whole character and outlook on life. Meno combines ambition and self-seeking with second-hand ideas from Gorgias and the remains of a respect for conventional

<sup>1</sup> 91a. Cf. *Prot.* 318e-319a. According to Aristotle (*EN* 1123a2), μεγαλοπρέπεια, named as a virtue by Meno at 74a, included ξένων υποδοχαὶ καὶ ἀποστολαί.

<sup>2</sup> This too he would have learned from Gorgias. Cf. *Gorg.* 452d.

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morality. He knew that *aretē* had a general as well as a particular usage, and so let himself be caught by Socrates in a confusion of enumeration with universal definition. Given the brazen consistency of a Callicles, he could have saved himself a lot of trouble by admitting that what he calls 'a man's virtue' is the only kind that he is interested in, or indeed recognizes, just as Nicias in the *Laches* denied the virtue of courage to children (p. 130 above).<sup>1</sup> Nor would a Callicles, having defined virtue as 'the power to get good things', have agreed to the addition of the word 'justly', thus once again laying himself open to the charge of sinning against logic by confusing part with whole and including definiendum in definiens. Again, when Socrates points out that to define a general concept it is no use saying that it includes many varieties and describing each one separately, and illustrates his lesson by the examples of a biological species (the bee, 72b), and of health, size and strength, Meno at first protests that the case of virtue is not parallel. He is no match for Socrates, but his protest arises not simply from obtuseness but from the teaching of his master Gorgias.<sup>2</sup> In insisting that we can only use the single name virtue on the assumption that it stands for a single, definable essence or form, the same in all its instances, Socrates was not only giving a lesson in logic but upholding the existence of an absolute moral standard against the hand-to-mouth ethics of the Sophists.

*Socratic definition.* The Socratic demand for definitions has been discussed at length in vol. III, 425–42. We have also met it in several of the early dialogues. Since however it is here expressed more fully and with greater attention to method, this may be a good place to mention that the whole assumption that we cannot know anything about  $x$  unless we know what  $x$  is in the sense of being able to define it, has been called 'the Socratic fallacy', and to consider briefly one or two objections to it.<sup>3</sup> As stated by Flew (*Introd.* 312), the fallacy

<sup>1</sup> In the *Prot.*, Protagoras's shift from ἀρετή to ἀνδρὸς ἀρετή (325a) passes without comment.

<sup>2</sup> Arist. *Pol.* 1260a25. See vol. III, 253 f. and 435 f. P. 254 quotes an example of such definition by enumeration in G.'s own writings.

<sup>3</sup> For fuller treatment readers may be referred to M. Andic in Brown's *Meno*, 291 ff., where he states and considers three objections brought against it by philosophers in the present century. See also Cross and Woollsey, *Rep.* 63–5. The 'Socratic fallacy' was attacked by

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lies in the fact that there are two senses of 'know what  $x$  is', of which the ability to give a satisfactory definition of it is not even the primary one. That is the recognitional sense, i.e. 'simply to be able to use the word  $x$  correctly in ordinary and typical contexts'. It is not surprising, he adds, that Laches, who will unfailingly recognize courage when he meets it, should be unable to define the word 'courage' in a way to satisfy Socrates.

On a different point, Robinson (*Essays* 32f.) says that before asking for a definition of  $x$  one should ask if it always means the same, or at least remember the possibility that it does not. Socrates demands of Meno that because he gives the same name to a number of things, he should identify the common element in all of them: he does not raise the apparently prior question whether we give the same name to each one in the same sense.

On this second point, Socrates knew very well that different people (or even the same people at different times) meant different things by the same words. (See vol. III, 431, and the quotations from Xenophon and Plato on p. 165.) He thought it wrong, however, because they did not realize that they were doing so, and so were confused in their own thoughts and in their communication with each other. Nor would matters be much improved from his point of view by substituting for the confusion an admission that a moral term had several meanings (or uses), for the moral order depended on its being used univocally. A term like *aretē* has, in modern terminology, emotive force. Whatever it is, everyone thinks it a good and desirable characteristic; and if we know that one man uses it for the power to rule, another for the acquisition of worldly goods, another for intellectual gifts and another for unselfishness, we are hardly helped in looking to it as an ideal or standard at which to aim. Admittedly Socrates, unlike his critics, spoke in the belief that such a standard of virtue did exist: it was not something that we arbitrarily fixed for ourselves but something that was there for us to discover, and in his belief it was single. Even so, he raises 'the prior question' in one

Geach in *Monist* 1966, and G. Santas defended it against him in *JHP* 1972. One of his points is that in *Euthyphro* S. is only asking from E. what he himself has claimed to know, viz. a general criterion for judging whether an act is pious or not.

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form in the *Protagoras*, much of which is a long inquiry into the question whether virtue is one or many. Nor does Plato always show him asking others for a definition and leading them into bafflement. In the *Gorgias* (463c) he refuses to answer the question whether rhetoric is good or bad until he has said *what* he thinks it is, and this he proceeds to do.<sup>1</sup>

The importance of agreeing on a definition for purposes of communication is noted by Plato at *Soph.* 218b–c, where the visitor suggests that together they seek out and make clear in speech what a Sophist is; ‘for at present you and I have only the word in common: the reality to which we refer by that name we each, perhaps, have privately in our minds, but it is always best, through discussion, to agree on the reality, rather than only on the name without discussion’. This fits with Socrates’s warning in the *Gorgias* (454c) against ‘anticipating one another’s statements because we have a vague suspicion of what they are likely to be’.

One must always remember that his concern with language, logic or method was only ancillary to a larger purpose. The end was right living, as Plato, for all his wider philosophical interests, never fails to make clear: ‘Inaccurate language is not only itself a mistake: it implants evil in men’s souls’ (*Phaedo* 115e). If we admit the recognitional sense of knowing what something is, as consisting in ‘the ability to use the word *x* correctly in ordinary and typical contexts’, the Socratic demand remains a salutary exercise in clear thinking. Laches the soldier, when asked what courage is, replies (like Meno with virtue) ‘That’s no problem’: a brave man is one who stands up to the enemy without flinching. A sailor or a mountaineer, faced unexpectedly with the same question, would probably answer similarly in terms of the hazards of his own occupation. But this is not an answer which covers all the ordinary and typical uses of the word, nor indeed does Laches believe that courage is limited in this way.

<sup>1</sup> In his order of procedure he has a distinguished successor. Russell began an essay (see *Portraits from Memory and other Essays* 160) by observing that there is general agreement that wisdom has not increased correlatively with knowledge. ‘But agreement ceases as soon as we attempt to define “wisdom” and consider means of promoting it. I want to ask *first* what wisdom is, and *then* what can be done to teach it’ (my italics). He agreed with S. too in believing that wisdom (which S. equated with *ἀρετή*) must include ‘a certain awareness of the ends of human life’.

## *The Meno*

When Socrates points out that courage is usually recognized in those who bravely face the sea, or illness, or poverty, or who have the moral fibre to resist their own baser impulses, he agrees at once. In a way, if you like, he *was* capable of recognizing courage in all its 'ordinary and typical contexts', but it did not occur to him that he would use the word in these contexts until Socrates had pointed it out. Socrates was quite serious when he said that his mission was not to teach people what they did not know, but to make them consciously aware of what they knew already. His (and Plato's) whole aim was to get men to think, to reflect on the various uses of a word and the reasons why the same word is used each time.<sup>1</sup> After all, the main lesson of the *Meno* is that what is called the acquisition of knowledge is no more than the explication of what was implicit, the actualization of knowledge that was potentially ours already. The syllogism does no more, but its formalization by Aristotle provided an important tool of thought nevertheless.

At 71 b, in making his point that one cannot know whether something has a certain attribute unless one knows what that something is, Socrates asks how a man who has no idea who Meno is could know whether he is handsome, rich or well-born. This looks like knowing in the sense of being able to recognize, and has on that account been condemned as inapt. Doubtless one knows Meno in a different way from knowing virtue, and as Aristotle was to emphasize, individuals are indefinable. Socrates (or Plato) often uses a rather loose analogy for what it is worth and no more.<sup>2</sup> But if it only means that one can recognize him at sight then it is not what Socrates and Plato meant by knowledge; and if one knows him properly – his character, habits, intellectual capacity, limitations – one can at least put this into words.

If nevertheless Socrates overplayed the claim that 'if we know something we can say what it is' (*Laches* 190c), it was due to his tendency to see all forms of knowledge as analogous to an exact science or a craft. It is not much use discussing with somebody

<sup>1</sup> Except of course in purely accidental coincidences of form, as with 'bear' or 'can' (verbs) and 'bear' or 'can' (nouns), where we are not dealing with the same words.

<sup>2</sup> On this, and on the difference between γινώσκειν (be acquainted with Meno) and εἰδέναι (know facts about him) see Bluck, *Meno* 212, 213 f.

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whether topology is a useful science or toreutic a difficult art if he cannot tell topology from topography and believes toreutic to be something to do with bullfighting. And in these cases certainly to know is to be able to say what they are.<sup>1</sup>

*No one desires evil* (77c–78b). One must admit that Plato lets Socrates make a wickedly sophistical use of ambiguity when he likes. Witness the way in which he uses Meno's last attempt at a definition ('to desire fine things and be able to acquire them', 77b) as an opportunity to prove his favourite thesis that no one does wrong willingly. This is certainly in place in a dialogue whose subject is the question whether virtue is teachable, and so whether it is knowledge; but the equivocations in which he indulges would not have been allowed to pass by an experienced 'verbal fighter' like Protagoras or a blunt immoralist like Callicles. However, they are enough for Meno, an impetuous youth who will never make a philosopher, though his enthusiasm for this kind of question has been momentarily fired by his contact with Gorgias. If the doctrine that no one knowingly chooses evil needs a better defence, that can wait until Socrates is faced with an interlocutor more likely to elicit it.

To prove it to Meno he divides those who choose evil into two classes: (a) those who do not know it is evil and (b) those who do. He has then to show that class (b) does not exist. For this purpose he subdivides it into (b i) those who think that evils benefit their possessor and (b ii) those who know that they harm him. But (b i) ought to be removed into class (a), since they obviously mistake evils for good; and as for (b ii), they must be supposed to desire their own injury and unhappiness, which nobody in fact does. Hence no one knowingly desires evil.

As to (b i), a Protagoras would doubtless have pointed out that those who think evils benefit their possessor (or evil actions the man

<sup>1</sup> Ovink (*Meno u. H. Min.* 61), after pointing out that (with certain reservations) S.'s point about not being able to state a *ποῖον* of something before one knows the *τί ἐστι* is not applicable to the classificatory methods of the natural (or at least the biological) sciences, goes on to say that it is true of (a) the constructions of mathematics, a non-empirical study, and (b) the products of technology. You cannot know the properties of a triangle without knowing what a triangle is, nor how a shoe comes into being (is made) if you are unacquainted with the essence (*Wesen*) of a shoe, i.e. its purpose.

who does them) do not necessarily mistake evil for good. They may know well that they are evils in a moral (or universal) sense; if they benefit their possessor but injure a hundred others, they will be far more evil than good. In general Socrates has utterly confused the moral and practical aspects of 'good'.<sup>1</sup> If to commit robbery with violence is bad, it does not follow that the stolen goods will injure their possessor in any commonly accepted sense of the word. The crowning equivocation comes when Meno is made to agree that whoever desires evil desires it 'to come to him' or 'to happen to him' (γενέσθαι αὐτῷ 77c). 'To have bad things happen to you' is the same as to suffer harm, but if you desire something evil – say another man's ruin or death – to 'have it come to you' need not harm you. No, with a more perspicacious opponent Socrates would certainly have had to carry his defence much further. How, we shall learn from the *Gorgias*. Briefly, he did it by extending the concepts of harm and benefit to cover the injury or welfare of the *psyche*. In this way, while maintaining this theoretically non-moral identification of good with useful or beneficial, he preached highly moral doctrine by arguing that immoral actions did in fact harm their perpetrator because they inevitably injured him in his most vital part, his real self. For Socrates, in fact, the moral and the practical or self-centred aspects of good coincide, and he was prepared to argue the point.<sup>2</sup> But it certainly needs argument, and that is not vouchsafed to Meno, who, as he says explicitly (78c), thinks of 'good' only in terms of external goods like riches and political power – the kind of goods which Gorgias claimed his pupils could attain through his art of rhetoric. Consequently he can only think of evil in terms of their opposites, poverty or political insignificance, and he is at the mercy of Socrates's verbal traps.

<sup>1</sup> M. was really beaten when he lightly agreed to the substitution of ἀγαθά for καλά at 77b7. These words may be near synonyms, but have in fact a different *ethos*. Thompson simply says (*Meno* 102) that by the substitution 'any poetic tinsel attaching to the word καλά is removed', but it is more than that. (S. should have remembered his Prodicus!) ἀγαθόν need have no moral flavour, but the opposite of καλόν is αἰσχρόν, base or disgraceful. It is worth comparing the whole passage with *Symp.* 204d–205a.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the conversation with Polus, esp. *Gorg.* 474c–477e. For S., in fact, καλόν and ἀγαθόν, αἰσχρόν and κακόν, were the same thing (see previous note), but only if one accepted his highly individual views. (*Gorg.* 477a οὐκοῦν εἶπερ καλά, ἀγαθά; and c, εἰ δὲ αἰσχίστη, καὶ κακίστη;) All this was true of the historic Socrates. See the account of him in vol. III, esp. pp. 466–73.



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*The definitions of shape (75b–76a).* The specimen definitions of shape, given by Socrates to encourage Meno to deal likewise with virtue, introduce the mathematical vein which sets this dialogue apart from its predecessors. His first suggestion ('Shape is what always accompanies colour' 75 b) is rejected by Meno on the ground that it is open to anyone to say he does not know what colour is. This (as Klein notes, p. 61) is a curious objection to come from Meno. He might mean that it has not yet been defined, were it not that he has apparently still not grasped the meaning of definition. Certainly everyone (save the blind or colour-blind) is aware of colour, as he has just shown himself to be in answering questions about the colour 'white'. Probably we are to imagine him clutching at anything which might conceivably put Socrates on the spot instead of himself. From Plato's point of view, the objection allows him to cross for the first time from the physical, sensible world to the mathematical. Socrates agrees that in a conversation between friends, as opposed to an argument with a contentious eristic, one must speak 'more dialectically'<sup>1</sup> and employ only concepts which the other accepts as familiar. But we note that 'what goes with colour' is shape in the popular sense of something visible, whereas the terms of the new definition, with which Meno declares himself satisfied – limit, surface and solid – are, as Socrates says (76a2), taken from geometry; and *schema* itself has been transformed from visible shape to geometrical figure.<sup>2</sup> As becomes even clearer later on, we must suppose Meno to be not unversed in mathematics, though he can hardly have learned it from Gorgias.<sup>3</sup> Gorgias's scientific interests are illustrated rather by the Empedoclean definition of colour which follows ('an effluence from shapes commensurate with sight and perceptible by it'), and which

<sup>1</sup> The first mention in P. of speaking dialectically. Since in discussions of his work so much is made of dialectic as a technical or semi-technical term, it is worth noticing this general use to stand for any philosophical discussion carried out in a spirit not of competition (as by the Sophists) but of cooperation, not for personal prestige but solely to reach the truth. (Cf. *Phil.* 17a.) Its use as determined by Aristotle in the *Topics* is far in the future.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Klein p. 65. I agree with Gulley (*CR* 1969, 162) that the chief value of K.'s commentary lies in its mathematical discussions and references to Greek texts and modern writings in the mathematical field.

<sup>3</sup> An interest of G. in mathematics is unattested and unlikely. There was a story (*DK* 82 A 17) that on a tablet at the tomb of his pupil Isocrates he was depicted looking at a celestial sphere, and astronomy came to be treated as a branch of mathematics; but the allusion could be rather to an Empedoclean interest in the whole physical universe.

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Socrates expressly connects with him and criticizes as inferior to his own definition of figure.<sup>1</sup>

*Learning as recollection* (81a-d).<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the doctrines of immortality and recollection, and their demonstration on the slave, is first to overcome Meno's difficulty about the acquisition of new knowledge, but also, by choosing a question to which Meno knows the answer but the slave does not, to show him that his reduction to helpless perplexity is no matter for complaint but the necessary preliminary to constructive thought (84a-d). The episode with the slave is a working model, and a vindicator, of the Socratic method.

The doctrine of *anamnesis* (recollection, calling to mind) is that the human soul is immortal and has been through many earthly lives and many periods of existence outside the body. It has thus 'seen all things, both those here and those in the other world, and there is nothing it has not learned'. Moreover 'all nature is akin', so that a soul which has been reminded of one thing only may from that go on to rediscover anything else<sup>3</sup> if it is willing to persevere. This is the truth, and the 'eristic argument', which would discourage us from the necessary effort, is false.

Plato does not claim originality for this teaching, and indeed the doctrines of immortality, reincarnation, remembrance of former lives and the kinship of all nature are all to be found in earlier Pythagoreanism and its sympathizers like Empedocles. (Even the connexion of universal kinship with the mathematical concept of proportion (ἀναλογία, *Tim.* 31c, 32c) can be traced back to them.) When he attributes them to theologically minded priests and priestesses, he probably has in mind the Orphics, whose religious beliefs were closely allied to those of the Pythagoreans.<sup>4</sup> But he has subtly transformed their religious dogmas to support his own philosophy. By the 'nature' (*physis*) which was 'all related', the Pythagoreans understood the

<sup>1</sup> I take this to refer to the second, geometrical definition of figure, though Klein (p. 70) seems to refer it to the first.

<sup>2</sup> For some bibliography on *anamnesis* see Heitsch, *Hermes* 1963, 36 n. 1.

<sup>3</sup> According to the principle of association of ideas, laid down at *Phaedo* 73c-e.

<sup>4</sup> For the Pythagoreans see vol. 1, 200ff., for Empedocles vol. 11, 250f., and for the Orphics vol. 1, 198 (and more fully Guthrie, *G. and G.* ch. 11).

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creatures of the visible world, and the memories which the soul preserved included ordinary events in a previous incarnation.<sup>1</sup> Plato on the other hand is speaking of non-empirical, mathematical truth, and of moral truth (81 c 8) which in his view was equally non-empirical, and he expressly says that the slave learned what he is now recalling 'when he was not a man' (86a), that is, when his soul was out of the body. Historical records or personal experiences do not form a system of interrelated realities such as Plato has in mind.

This part of the *Meno* must be explained in the light of other dialogues of the middle period which no doubt were written after it. Earlier (pp. 190f. above) I deprecated reading the ideas of later dialogues about transcendent Forms into the early group simply because the form which Socrates sought, the one essence in the many particulars, was described in similar language. The reason was that the transcendence of the Forms brought with it so much else – talk of immortality, of a winged soul meeting with truth in a place beyond the heavens, of the vision of bodiless beauty – which is unthinkable in the context of a work like the *Hippias Major*. Now however the great step has been taken: the religious doctrine has been invoked, and our theory of knowledge has been inseparably linked with immortality, as in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. In the earlier dialogues we saw Plato working out the implications of Socrates's questions: What is courage?, What is piety?, and finding that they led to certain perplexities. He was determined to uphold them, because apart from his personal devotion to Socrates, he believed (against the Sophists), first, that a good life demanded adherence to permanent standards, independent of temporary expediency, and secondly that certain knowledge was attainable, and this, for reasons arising in part out of the earlier history of thought, seemed to demand the existence of stable, unchanging objects.

If Socrates's questions were not pseudo-questions, the virtues must be existing things, over and above their imperfect exemplification in human actions. This indeed was suggested by ordinary language (p. 223 above), but was harder to establish philosophically. Plato's

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Heraclides *ap.* D.L. 8.4 (vol. 1, 164), where Pythagoras is said to have remembered events of his previous incarnations as Aethalides, Euphorbus and Hermotimus. So here in describing the religious doctrine P. speaks at 81 c of the soul having seen 'all things both here and in Hades'.

solution was the doctrine of transcendent Forms, changeless, eternal, independent of their imperfect manifestations or 'imitations' (*mimeseis*) in this world and imperceptible to the senses. It involved him in a number of further problems, some of which only gradually obtruded themselves. The immediate questions were two: was there any evidence for the existence of perfect and changeless entities outside the empirical world, and if so, how could they be known, being *ex hypothesi* beyond experience? And the answers to both were suggested by Pythagorean philosophy.<sup>1</sup> First, the changeless world of mathematics, which the Pythagoreans had shown to lie behind the phenomenal world and to impart to it the order and regularity which it displayed ('for the Pythagoreans say that things exist by *mimesis* of numbers', Arist. *Metaph.* 987b11), made it easier to believe in the changeless world of moral (and later other) Forms. It is true that the angles of a triangle together equal 180°, yet it is not precisely true of any triangle drawn by man or seen in a triangular piece of material. No visible line is the mathematical line, which having no breadth cannot be seen. These only approximate to the truth, as a just action approximates to the Form of Justice. Pythagorean mathematics made it antecedently possible to believe in realities beyond the sensible world, which moreover are responsible (*aitia*) for it, just as, in what was (according to tradition at least) the original discovery of Pythagoras that started him thinking on these lines, a strictly intelligible numerical structure accounted for the beauty of a melody. We explain the independence of mathematical truth by saying that the mathematician's statements are analytic, simply setting forth the logical consequences of defining a triangle or a straight line in the way we do. They reveal more fully the implications of our concepts, but do not describe external reality. This would not have appealed to Plato. What impressed him was the timeless truth of this kind of statement, and the fact that the shapes of sensible things could never, as it were, live up to it completely. It must be the same with ideas like justice and beauty. We could not compare two actions in point of justice if we had not a conception of an absolute

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that the problem which S. sets the slave to solve involves the traditional 'theorem of Pythagoras'. On Pythagorean influence in general see A. Cameron, *Pyth. Background*.

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standard of reference. This we could not have acquired merely from observing human actions, for he held that acquaintance with the imperfect could never of itself give knowledge of the perfect. For knowledge to be possible, the perfect, changeless Forms must somehow exist.

But how have we acquired a knowledge of them? Taking his cue again from the Pythagoreans, Plato replied that the soul became acquainted with the Forms before it entered the body. To see things which are all imperfect – whether triangles, moral acts, or instances of physical beauty – could not of itself implant in our minds the knowledge of perfection or a standard by which to judge them; but given that the vision preceded,<sup>1</sup> these same instances can help us to recover it. The experience of birth and association with a body has made the soul forgetful (in the *Republic*, 621a, he symbolizes this by the myth of the water of Lethe), and the copies can remind it of what it once knew. Some of course are content to remain among the mutable copies, at the mercy of shifting opinions. To attain knowledge a soul must possess the philosophic impulse (*eros*) and be willing to make the necessary intellectual effort.<sup>2</sup>

In the last paragraph the word 'vision' is used advisedly. The mind's knowledge of the ideal Forms was not originally acquired in the way that it is recovered in this life, by a laborious process of dialectical or discursive reasoning. In the *Meno* the soul has *seen* (ἐώρακεῖν 81c6) all things, and the *Phaedrus* describes the circuit of gods and philosophic souls around the rim of heaven, where with the eye of the mind they *see* the truth, they *behold* reality – intangible, without colour or shape – they '*catch sight of*<sup>3</sup> justice, temperance and knowledge as they are in themselves, not the knowledge bound up with becoming, that varies with the changing objects which we now call real, but the true knowledge of what truly is'. Here is Plato's answer to an objection some-

<sup>1</sup> All human souls have had at least a glimpse of the forms (*Phdr.* 249b, p. 404 below).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 81d: 'if one has courage and does not weary in the search'. This is of course an unalterable conviction of P.'s. Nowhere does he assume, as Gulley suggests of the *Phaedo* (CQ 1954, 198), that 'the senses are always to be trusted'. He would say with Heraclitus (fr. 107) that they are bad witnesses to a mind that cannot interpret their message. That is the initial state of the slave, when on seeing the visible square he makes a wrong guess at the answer to the problem of constructing its double.

<sup>3</sup> The verbs used are θεᾶσθαι, ἰδεῖν, θεωρεῖν, καθορᾶν. (*Phdr.* 247c-d.)

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times raised, that *anamnesis* only pushes Meno's 'eristic' question one stage further back. If it is impossible to find out what one does not know already, how did the soul learn in the first place what it 'recollects' in this life? His answer is that it did not have to learn,<sup>1</sup> but knew the Forms by direct acquaintance. The analogy with sight (developed in *Rep.* 6) is meant seriously. *Nous*, the highest intellectual faculty, is not the ability to reason things out to a conclusion: it is (for both Plato and Aristotle) what gives an intuitive and immediate grasp of reality, a direct contact between the mind and truth. While we are in the body, such contact can only be recovered as the culmination of a process of reasoning (identified at *Meno* 98a with *anamnesis*), but for the disembodied mind it is a matter of direct vision.

*Forms in the Meno.* At *Phaedo* 74a ff. the argument for *anamnesis* runs like this.<sup>2</sup> We know what equality is. We get this knowledge from seeing what we call equal sensible objects, which however are not the same as equality but fall short of it. Now if we can say this, that what we see resembles something but falls short of identity with it, we must have had previous knowledge of the other thing. Hence we knew equality before our perception of equal sensibles first led us to conceive that they imperfectly resembled it. From this it is concluded that our knowledge of equality came before our acquisition of sense-organs, when our souls were 'not yet in human shape', as in the *Meno*, 86a, the slave acquired his correct opinions 'when he was not a man'. Moreover, the same applies to goodness, justice, piety, and everything 'on which we set the seal of absolute being' (75 c-d, 76d).

Here in an argument for *anamnesis* the moral forms are linked with the mathematical as objects of pre-natal knowledge. Some have argued that this is not so in the *Meno*, and that the doctrine is promulgated there without a belief in transcendent Forms: 'in the *Meno* the theory of Ideas is carried no farther than in earlier dialogues'.<sup>3</sup> This is incredible.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 86a, τὸν αἰὲν χρόνον μεμαθηκῖα ἔσται, 'it will be for all time in a state of having learned'.

<sup>2</sup> Any comment on this argument must come later. It is well discussed by Hackforth, *Phaedo* 74-7.

<sup>3</sup> Ross, *PTI* 18. Ross's position has been opposed by Gulley, *l.c.* 196f., Vlastos, *Dialogue* 1965, and others. For further reff. see Ebert, *Mein. und Wiss.* 84 n. 2. It will appear that I am

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The arguments are exactly similar. As in the *Phaedo* 'we' are reminded of absolute equality by the sight of approximately equal things, so the slave recalls an abstract, lasting truth of geometry through seeing visible lines, roughly drawn and soon to be obliterated. Moreover the experiment would fail of its purpose unless virtue, like mathematics, was known to us in our pre-natal state, and Plato takes the trouble to say that it was (81 c8); and if a moral quality existing outside the sensible world, and seen by bodiless souls, is not a Form or Platonic Idea, it is difficult to see what is.

*Socrates and the slave* (82b–85b). The first half of their talk follows amusingly the course so far of the dialogue with Meno. Shown a square of side 2 feet, the slave states confidently that one double its area would have a side twice as long. (Aside to Meno: 'Now he thinks he knows, but does he?' 'No.' Cf. *Apol.* 21d.) When such a square is drawn, it needs only a few more lines to show him that his answer is wrong. The answer must lie between 2 and 4, so he suggests 3, but is soon shown (visibly, by diagram) that this would give a square of area 9, not the required 8.<sup>1</sup> At this point he gives up. Socrates has 'numbed' him as he did Meno. But in this case Meno can see that his consciousness of ignorance is a better state than his false conceit of knowledge. Socrates can now begin the constructive part of the lesson, to which he would like to bring Meno. He draws a diagonal across the original square, and with additions to the diagram<sup>2</sup> gets him to see that this cuts the square in half and that a square drawn on it as

not in total agreement with Gulley's treatment of the question in his *PTK* 16–21. It is at least interesting that what S. has asked M. to define is the εἶδος (72c7 and e5). This surely invalidates Ebert's claim (*Man and World* 1973, 180 n. 2) that 'there is no statement in the Meno that would support Cherniss' claim that "in the Meno 'to know' is admittedly to know the εἶδος"'. For the real S., of course, this was no more than a common character. The introduction of *anamnesis* shows that for P. it was already something more.

<sup>1</sup> S. now tells the slave that if he prefers not to state the length in figures he may simply point out the required line on the diagram. This is considerate of him, knowing as he does that the length ( $\sqrt{8}$ ), being irrational, cannot be expressed numerically. On incommensurability and irrationals see vol. 1, 265. J. E. Thomas, in an article taking issue with Brown's interpretation (*Laval th. et ph.* 1970), is 'puzzled' by the question: 'How does one account for the abrupt shift from preoccupation with the length of the side of the 8-foot square to the introduction of the diagonal?' I may have missed a point here, but considering that the side of the 8-foot square is the diagonal of the 4-foot, I find his puzzlement puzzling.

<sup>2</sup> The appropriate diagrams may be found in a number of commentaries or translations, e.g. Thompson, Bluck, Klein and the Penguin edition.

base will contain four such halves, i.e. an area equal to twice the whole.

Socrates claims that he has told the boy nothing but only asked him questions in the right order, thereby eliciting knowledge which was in his mind all the time. We may think his questions decidedly leading,<sup>1</sup> but certain points emerge from the choice of a mathematical example. Mathematical knowledge cannot be handed over by a teacher like the chemical formula for water or the name of the first President of the United States. Each must comprehend it for himself, and when he does so, as N. Hartmann put it (*Kl. Schr.* II, 57), the surprising fact emerges that he discovers precisely what everyone else must discover. The boy does not say 'yes' or 'no' to please Socrates, but because he sees that it is the obvious answer. What shows him his errors, and the right answers, is not so much the questions as the diagrams themselves, and were he mathematically inclined he might, given time, draw the diagrams and deduce the truth from them, without an instructor, as the boy Pascal is said to have done.<sup>2</sup> This answers, or at least weakens, another objection to the experiment in its context. Socrates and Meno want to find out something that neither of them knows, whereas Socrates, whether or not his questions to the slave give away their answers, does know the solution to the problem that he sets the slave, and his questions are dictated by his knowledge. Meno has to know it too, so that he can see the relevance of the lesson to his own predicament. So the circumstances are not parallel. One may reply in the words of Flew (*Introd.* 404): 'What has to be recognized is that whoever taught Meno's slave, no one ever taught Pythagoras.' The experiment distinguishes for the first time between empirical and *a priori* knowledge, the one referring to the natural, changeable world and the other to universal and timeless truths; and it suggests that whereas facts of the former kind are drawn solely from experience of the world outside us, or external authority, the latter type of knowledge seems to emerge

<sup>1</sup> Whether the first questions, to 82d (Does the slave recognize a square? Are all its sides equal? How big is it and how big would one double the size be?), supply their own answers is irrelevant. This is only the preliminary stage of setting the problem and making sure that he understands the terms to be used, as when S. asked M. if he understood the terms limit, surface, solid.

<sup>2</sup> For Pascal see Cornford, *B. and A. S.* 72f.



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from inside our minds, worked out by ourselves. Doubtless the two halves of the visible square, when Socrates had traced it with a stick on the ground and ploughed a diagonal across it, were *not* precisely equal; but the slave replies confidently (and this time rightly) that they are, because he knows, without being told, that the question refers not to this particular square but to the universal, mathematical concept of a square.<sup>1</sup> It is, Plato would say, a truth of the intelligible, not of the sensible world, and in the existence of mathematical truth of this kind he saw support for a belief in the existence of Virtue, Justice and so on as independent and definable realities. Here too he was influenced by the Pythagoreans, who included justice in their equation of 'things' with numbers,<sup>2</sup> but for Plato knowledge of the Forms was of a higher order, and they themselves belonged to a higher order of being, than the objects of mathematics because the mind could recollect them by pure thought without recourse to visible images. All this is worked out in the simile of the divided line in the *Republic*, where it is concluded that the degrees of knowledge correspond in clarity to the degrees of reality<sup>3</sup> in their objects.

*Knowledge and true belief* (1). If Socrates, like a second-rate teacher, instead of questioning the slave had simply told him, 'To draw a square double the area of a given square, draw it on the diagonal of that square', the slave might easily have forgotten the sentence, or, since he had not understood the reasoning behind it, have believed someone else who told him differently. As it is his belief will not be easily shaken, for he has seen that neither a double side nor one  $1\frac{1}{2}$  times as long will do, and he has a mental picture of how the double square is built of four half squares. Yet Socrates says that though truly his own, the beliefs are

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Rep.* 510d-e: '[Geometers] make use of visible forms and discuss them, though they are not thinking of them but of the originals which they resemble: their reasoning is about the absolute square and its diagonal, not the one that they have drawn, and so with other figures. They use the figures which they draw or make . . . as images, but their aim is to see the realities which can only be seen by the mind.' The thesis that sensible objects point the way to realities beyond them is extended from the mathematical field to moral Forms in *Phaedo* (75a-b and d).

<sup>2</sup> Justice was a square number (4 or 9) as conveying the notion of reciprocity. See vol. 1, 301-6.

<sup>3</sup> 511d. 'Degrees of reality' has become a controversial phrase since Vlastos queried its accepted meaning, but this will be discussed in its proper place (pp. 493-8 below).

still beliefs, not knowledge (85 c). As so far 'stirred up' in him, they have a dreamlike quality, and to attain the absolute certainty of knowledge the questions would have to be repeated to him in different ways. But that even he *can* attain knowledge without being told is now beyond doubt. One of the most important lessons of the *anamnesis* doctrine was that learning was a continuous *process*, with several stages between (apparent) blank ignorance and knowledge – important because it invalidated the Sophists' favourite method of attack by the crude 'either-or' question: 'How can we learn either what we know or what we don't know?' or the similar question in the *Euthydemus* (275 d): 'Who are the learners, the wise or the ignorant?' It has been said that Plato offers no explanation of the false beliefs which the slave first produced. Only at a later stage, it is true, when his philosophy had become more critical, did he (in the *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*) seriously tackle the question of the origin of false opinions; but for him at present *anamnesis* is itself an explanation. It means, after all, remembering, and we all know what happens when we try to remember, say, a name that we have forgotten. A number of wrong names suggest themselves first, and though we cannot yet hit on the right one, our previous, now latent, knowledge enables us to reject them and to recognize the right one when it comes. 'Baxter?' we say. 'No. Bolton, Butler?' We're getting nearer, surely. 'Ah – Butcher; that's it.' With the truths of reason, the gradual approach to the correct answer is a matter of strenuous intellectual activity, but the process is analogous. Twice the length? After further thought, no. A length and a half? Nearer, but when we work out the consequences we see that it will not give the right answer either. And so on. If the false suggestions did not intervene, we should have no process of learning but the impossible leap from sheer ignorance to knowledge which the *anamnesis*-doctrine is designed to avoid. According to it, there is no such thing as blank ignorance in the sense that the mind is a *tabula rasa* or blank sheet of paper. Rather is there writing on it in invisible ink, awaiting the proper reagent to make it perceptible. And if we try to decipher it hastily, or before it has fully come up, we may make mistakes.

The status of true belief will assume greater importance later in the dialogue (pp. 261–4 below).

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*Does Plato believe it all?*<sup>1</sup> At 86b Socrates says: 'I would not take my oath on the rest', but what he would maintain is that we shall be better men if we believe it right (οἰόμενοι δεῖν) to look for what we do not know. We must, I think, take these words at their face value, which is that 'the rest' includes the whole 'priestly' doctrine of immortality, reincarnation, and truth learned in a disembodied state. All that the experiment with the slave has *demonstrated* is that our minds *somehow* contain latent knowledge which we can recover without having it put there by someone else, and this is sufficient to invalidate the eristic argument. It does not however mean that Plato did not *believe* the religious doctrine;<sup>2</sup> only, taking his cue from the real Socrates, he will not be dogmatic about something that he has not yet proved. The proof of immortality must wait till the *Phaedo*, where it is inseparable from the doctrines of reincarnation and *anamnesis*. In the *Phaedo* too there is something that Socrates would not 'take his oath on' or 'assert dogmatically' (the same word, δισχυρίζεσθαι, as in the *Meno*) but it applies only to the mythical details of the soul's journeyings, and other experiences after death. 'It would not be sensible', says Socrates, 'to assert dogmatically that these things are exactly as I have described, but *since the soul has been shown to be immortal*, I think we ought to venture the belief that this or something like it is what happens.'

*Is virtue knowledge?* (Cf. summary, p. 239 above.) To illustrate the meaning of arguing from a hypothesis, Plato in his new enthusiasm for

<sup>1</sup> For a different view see Ebert in *Man and World* 1973. He believes, on pertinent grounds of style, that the account of *anamnesis* is a parody of Gorgiasic *epideixis*; but that the content should be Sophistic, as he maintains, is to me at least incredible. S. was as great a master of rhetoric as any Sophist (pp. 414 f. below), and to convince M. of his beliefs addresses him in the language he will best appreciate. For Plato's S. to ignore his own precept that answers should be as short as possible (Ebert 117) is nothing unusual. (Ebert develops his view of the metaphorical character of *anamnesis* in *Mein. u. Wiss.* 1974.) For Ritter too (*Essence* 121-3) *anamnesis* was a fiction, not to be taken literally. It meant 'nothing else but what we today express in Kantian terminology' as the *a priori* element in the knowing process. I fear that Kantian terminology here could involve us in the abandonment of something that was to P. both true and important. The idea that *anamnesis* was simply a metaphorical expression of the purely logical concept of the *a priori* goes back to Leibniz. For its history see Ebert, *Mein. und Wiss.* 1974, 13 ff., 85 ff.

<sup>2</sup> At 81a the priestly λόγος is 'in my opinion' not only καλός but ἀληθής. Nor is it necessary, or even natural, to regard S.'s hesitation at 86b6-7 as a retraction of his immediately preceding claim that 'if the truth about reality is always in our soul' - i.e. if what we now call a *priori* knowledge is possible - 'the soul must be immortal'.

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mathematics illustrates it by a geometrical example so obscure to us that its interpretation is endlessly disputed.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately it is unnecessary to an understanding of what he means by arguing from a hypothesis. It differs somewhat from what we ordinarily mean by this familiar device.<sup>2</sup> We cannot answer a question as it stands, so we say, 'Well, if so-and-so is the case, the answer must be such-and-such. So let us *assume* that it is the case, and examine the consequences of that assumption. This should help us to discover whether the assumption is true, and so what is the answer to our original question.' Plato's Socrates, on the other hand, says, 'If virtue is knowledge it will be teachable, therefore we must first investigate whether it is knowledge' (87c). The hypothesis is not to be assumed but proved. What *we* might call the hypothesis on which they are arguing (and it is called such by Socrates at 87d3) is the statement that virtue is good. This agreed starting-point is indeed a tautology, *aretē* being the noun corresponding to the adjective *agathon*. This perhaps affords an excuse for Socrates, who has denied that he can know a property of anything when he does not know *what* it is, affirming that it has the property 'good'. At the same time, the answer given by *anamnesis* to the question 'How can you discover anything when you don't in the least know what it is?' was to the effect that our minds never are in a state of utter and complete ignorance. In any case, as we have seen (p. 165 above), this opening was a standard one for Socrates.

By treating the proposition 'virtue is knowledge' not as a hypothesis but as the immediate subject of investigation, Socrates has led the

<sup>1</sup> 86e-87b. Heath in 1921 (*HGM* 1, 298) says that Blass in 1861 knew of 30 different interpretations and many more had appeared since. Bluck devotes an appendix to a critique of earlier explanations (*Meno* 441-61). Possibly the technical use of argument from a hypothesis *was* mathematical, and P. was extending it, just as 'asymptotic' is beginning to be used in non-mathematical contexts ('Our advance to knowledge is of asymptotic type', Sherrington, *M. on his N.*, Pelican ed. 301) but anyone explaining it would still refer to graphs and coordinates. That ὑπόθεσις had a non-technical sense of 'supposition', probably narrowed by Socrates to 'suggested definition', appears likely from *Euthyphro* 11c (and cf. 9d), *Gorg.* 454c (both probably earlier than *Meno*) and *Xen. Mem.* 4.6.13. In *Meno* too the hypothesis takes the form of a definition. Cf. vol. III, 433 n. 2. There is little evidence for Thompson's statement (*ad loc.*) that 'the word ὑπόθεσις was familiar in P.'s time in the ordinary scientific sense of "an assumption"'. The only relevant examples in LSJ are all from the Hippocratic *VM*, whose priority to P. is at least doubtful. See also on this point Wilam., *Pl.* II, 150 and Robinson, *PED* 99f. On the background of the three mathematical passages in *Meno* cf. Gaiser in *AGPh* 1964, 241-92.

<sup>2</sup> On whether S. here disregards his own advice at *Phaedo* 101e, see Sayre, *PAM* 29 n. 40.

guileless Meno back to his own question of its essential nature. The argument from right use<sup>1</sup> provides a theoretical proof of its truth, but for once Socrates is not satisfied with theory but insists on testing it empirically: if *aretē* could be taught, undoubtedly there would be people able and willing to teach it, but they cannot be found. When Socrates tried to argue this in the *Protagoras* (and his argument from fathers and sons is repeated here), it was skilfully disputed by Protagoras on his own behalf. This would not suit Plato's present purpose, so the claim of the Sophists to teach it, which was too well known to go unmentioned, is rapidly disposed of first by Anytus and then by Meno's admiration for Gorgias, who laughed at it. (Thus the episode with Anytus, apart from its dramatic effect, which was clearly very important for Plato, does have some bearing on the progress of the argument.) It is concluded therefore that the theoretical proof was wrong, and there must be something else which will fulfil the condition of ensuring right use.

Socrates has given a casual nod to the doctrine of *anamnesis* by saying (87b), 'If virtue is not knowledge, can anyone teach it – or as we said just now, remind someone of it? We need not quarrel about which word to use.' This is a change from the way he rebuked Meno at 81e for using the word 'teach', when he had just been told there is no such thing as teaching; and in fact in the course of the discussion he does use 'teaching' as Meno and everyone else use it, to mean a 'handing over' of something,<sup>2</sup> as the Sophists sold their subjects of instruction (*Prot.* 313a), which is precisely what could not be done with the knowledge which is virtue as Socrates understood it. *Aretē*, we know, commonly

<sup>1</sup> It may seem strange that justice, σωφροσύνη and εὐμαθία should be included as liable to abuse. σωφροσύνη ἀνευ νοῦ (88b) sounds like a contradiction, but the key to the whole passage is given by *Phaedo* 68d–69c. (See p. 234 above.) S. is speaking of these 'virtues' in their popular senses. In the Socratic sense they are already forms of knowledge, not separate virtues but a unity. It is easy to think how 'courage' can be misused (p. 128 n. 1 above) and σωφροσύνη in its popular sense of 'temperance' meant only holding back temporarily to get more pleasure in the end. Or P. may have in mind here that 'temperance' could be used, as sometimes today, to mean not moderate use of something but its total rejection: extreme ascetic practices can ruin health. This is what Aristotle called the vice of the ἀναίσθητος, deviating from the norm of the σώφρων in one direction as the ἀκόλαστος in the other (*EN* 1104a24). The *virtue* of εὐμαθία, quickness at picking up things, depends on *what* you pick up. It may only lead to πολυμαθία, which as Heraclitus said (fr. 40) νόον οὐ διδάσκει. (For P., Hippias was an obvious example of this.) The same phrase ἀνευ νοῦ is used of 'so called' σωφροσύνη and δικαιοσύνη at *Phaedo* 82b.

<sup>2</sup> παραδοῦναι, παραδοτόν, παραληπτόν 93b.

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meant being good *at* something, so that Socrates's insistence that it consisted in knowledge would not seem so paradoxical to a Greek as it does to us. But although to make his point he started from the analogy with the crafts, he did not believe that the knowledge which is virtue was a mere technical skill like horsemanship. This is the truth which Plato is now seeking to substantiate philosophically. Virtue is nothing less than the knowledge of good and evil, and that is something which each man must discover for himself, till he *sees* it as inevitably as one *sees* a mathematical proposition after following every step of the proof. In this process another man may help, but it is useless to tell his pupil the answer as he tells him how to use the reins in order to get the best out of his horse. The one is an empirical fact and belongs to the world of change. The other is an intellectual discovery about the intelligible world to which both mathematical and moral truths belong, where Justice and Virtue are always the same and a tangent truly and timelessly touches its circle at one point only. No: if virtue cannot be taught in the sense of being handed over like a parcel, that is for Plato no indication that it is not knowledge.

*Knowledge and true (right)<sup>1</sup> belief* (2) (97a-99d). Right opinions, or true beliefs, so long as they last, are as good a guide to right action as knowledge. They differ from knowledge in being (a) unstable (98a), (b) impossible to transmit to others (99b). They may be converted into knowledge, and 'tied down' so that they cannot slip out of the mind, by 'working out the reason' (αἰτίας λογισμῷ 98a); 'and this is recollection, as we agreed earlier'. Suddenly we are brought back to the Platonic realm of intelligible reality, not inferred or abstracted from earthly events but recollected from the mind's prenatal acquaintance with it. The 'reason' which is worked out is (as in the mathematical demonstration) the logical reason for a necessary consequence, not the cause of an effect in this world. *Anamnesis* restores to us guiding principles transcending nature or society. Our present politicians rely on a certain knack of hitting on the right solution<sup>2</sup> to practical problems without

<sup>1</sup> The two epithets, ὀρθή and ἀληθής, are used indifferently.

<sup>2</sup> εὖδοξία 99b11. It *may* be that P. intends a pun on the usual meaning of the word, namely 'good reputation', as some have thought (see Tigerstedt, *P.'s Idea* etc. 43), but it does not seem to me very apt. I prefer a suggestion of Cornford's, that P. has coined a sense

full understanding, and therefore without the means of explaining their actions (λόγον διδόναι 81a) and so training others to do the same. In this they may be compared to poets and prophets who say many true things but know nothing of what they are saying. They too by their speeches win deserved success, yet (it is repeated) know nothing of what they are saying. People who are so successful 'without thought' (ἄνευ νοῦ) must surely be called divine – and after all, women and Spartans do call good men 'divine'. 'They seem to be right', says Meno, 'though Anytus may be angry with you for saying so.'

I have reproduced the last few sentences fairly fully to bring out their ironical flavour, which some have missed.<sup>1</sup> It did not escape Meno when he said that they would make Anytus angry, and the reference to the slang use of 'divine' by women and Spartans (not popular with democrats) would hardly appease him. Moreover 99c4–6 is a word-for-word repetition of *Apol.* 22c2–3, the point of which is that poets think they are wise in matters in which they are not, and that in recognizing his own ignorance Socrates is superior to them 'as to the politicians'.<sup>2</sup> No, whatever his final opinion of poets and prophets, Plato never thought of fifth-century politicians as divinely endowed.

What then is the status of *doxa*<sup>3</sup> in the *Meno*? The statesman's decisions are practical, to be acted on. Hence he must constantly be referring them to concepts of value. If we do this, will it be right? Will it be profitable? Will it be cowardly? His life is a series of judgements in the field of the just and the unjust, the beneficial and the harmful, the courageous and the cowardly, the honourable and the disgraceful. In

for the word that would be obvious from the context, namely the faculty of forming ὁρθαὶ δόξαι in a given situation, related to δόξα as εὐβουλία to βουλή (for which see Arist., *EN* 1142b16).

<sup>1</sup> Wilamowitz (*Pl.* II, 152f.) took it all as genuinely complimentary, and has been followed by Klara Buchmann, but by few others. He noted that the words θεῖα μοῖρα are used by S. of his own mission at *Apol.* 33c. Of course the same phrases can be used seriously as well as ironically, and Plato never suggested that S. had no φρόνησις or νοῦς but only irrational inspiration.

<sup>2</sup> When whole sentences are repeated, the resemblance cannot possibly be accidental. Note also that the word θεόμαντις occurs nowhere else in P. (nor, I believe, in extant classical literature).

<sup>3</sup> The word variously translated 'opinion', 'belief', 'judgement'. Since it acquires a semi-technical sense in P., it will be best to follow him in using a single term in the appropriate contexts. (He never confines himself rigidly to technical terms. In *Rep.* τὸ δοξαστόν (510a9) is the object of πίστις (511e1), and πίστις also = δόξα at *Tim.* 29c.)

individual cases a man of *aretē* (as commonly understood) will most often make the right answer, so achieving his own success and enhancing the power, wealth and reputation of his city. Yet even such men, as Socrates discovered, if you ask them what they mean by these terms, can give no adequate reply. They may, like Meno, offer instances: 'This or that was a just act, and to behave like that is what justice means.' Now according to Plato true beliefs are latent in the mind of everyone, and it is therefore possible for them to come to the surface of our consciousness. In so far as this is not the result of a properly conducted dialectical process, and so not knowledge in Plato's sense, it might perhaps be described as a gift from Heaven, but only in the sense that the Greeks attributed any piece of luck to Hermes.

For practical purposes the good statesman is in the same condition as the slave after his questioning. Socrates does not claim that he has knowledge. The single rapid run through the proof, with himself very much in the lead, has not sufficed to make the 'working out the reason' part and parcel of this thought and put him in unshakable possession of the truth (85 c). What has been achieved is the substitution of true for false *doxai* and the opening of a path to knowledge hitherto closed by the slave's impression that he knew what he did not. His having true *doxai* 'stirred up in him like a dream' corresponds to the state of mind of the good statesman. While it lasts he and his city will prosper, but it is dangerous because like the statues of Daedalus his present convictions may give him the slip. To secure them permanently he would have to complete the process of *anamnesis*. Then, knowing the essence of the unchanging *Forms* of just, brave and the rest, he would no longer rely on an empirical guess as to the probable outcome of his actions, and by this reference to the external standard of independently existing *Forms*, his policy would acquire a virtue and above all a *consistency* hitherto unheard of and unattainable. His former right *doxa* would have become knowledge 'by working out the reason', for the *Form* of Good, if he only knew it, is the *cause* of a good act (Plato's development of the Socratic dictum that 'by the *x* all *xs* are *x*'; see p. 119 above).

To conclude, *doxa* in the *Meno* is a dim and uncertain awareness of the same objects (the *Forms*) of which knowledge is the full, clear and



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stable understanding. Later we shall find Plato using the word of our cognition of the physical world of becoming and change which can never be the object of knowledge because of its own impermanent and unstable character. The difference between the two conceptions of *doxa* and knowledge is that between different grades of cognition of the same objects and cognition of two different classes of objects, and one would suppose that whereas the one kind of *doxa* can be converted into knowledge (*Meno* 98a6), the other cannot. The subject is taken up again in the *Republic*, where we shall have to consider whether there is a real inconsistency here between two periods of Plato's thought.<sup>1</sup>

Socrates now sums up: *If* in all this discussion we have asked the right questions and said the right things, virtue is not something in a man's nature, nor instilled by teaching, but he who has it gets it by divine dispensation *without intelligence* (ἀνευ νοῦ is repeated), *unless* a statesman should arise capable of turning another into a statesman. *He* would be like Homer's Tiresias among the shades, *the only one in possession of his faculties*. This is the outcome of our *present* reasoning, but we shall only know the plain truth when we stop putting the cart before the horse and try to discover *what virtue is in and by itself* (99e–100b).

The message is clear. The present conclusion is *not* the correct one, because Meno has made Socrates ask the wrong question. Virtue *is* knowledge, the knowledge that has been shown to be the recovery of the changeless Form of virtue from the depths of the mind. Given that, a man cannot fail to act in accordance with it. It can be taught if teaching is understood to be what Socrates describes in the *Theaetetus*<sup>2</sup> as assisting in bringing to birth truths with which another is pregnant, but not in the Sophistic sense of handing over ready-made packets of knowledge. As for the statesman who could educate another, Plato may have been thinking of Socrates, who says in his *Gorgias* (521d) 'I believe that I am almost the only, not to say *the* only Athenian to

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 489–93 below, and p. 386 (on *Symp.* 202a). I regret that Ebert's *Meinung und Wissen* (1974) came (through the kindness of its author) into my hands too late for me to do it justice here.

<sup>2</sup> 150c–d. See vol. III, 444.

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embark on the genuine art of politics, and the only living man to perform the statesman's task.' But Socrates is turning into Plato (as Dodds notes *ad loc.*, the boast is hardly in the vein of the historic Socrates), who aims at founding a school for the education of statesmen. The ideas have already germinated which will bear fruit in the *Republic*, where the ideal statesman is also the philosopher who has recaptured the vision of the Form of Good through a course of study in which years of mathematics are the indispensable prelude to dialectic, the science which is able 'to exact an account of the essence of each thing and impart it to another' (*Rep.* 534b). Only when that is mastered will the (for Socrates) essential question of the *Protagoras* and *Meno* be answered.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE: KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

At 88b, S. substitutes *phronesis* (usually translated 'wisdom' or 'good sense') for *epistēmē* (knowledge), obviously with no change of meaning intended. Thompson *ad loc.* called *phronesis* 'the mental faculty correlative to it', but as *Euthyd.* and other dialogues make clear, the relationship is almost one of identity. *Sophia* (wisdom) and *epistēmē* are similarly interchangeable. The general association of *sophia* with knowledge, especially practical knowledge or skill, has been illustrated in vol. III, p. 27, and here at 93d Clephantus is *sophos* in horsemanship and other accomplishments. At *Euthyd.* 281b both *phronesis* and *sophia* are equated with *epistēmē* (cf. 282a and *Tht.* 145e), and at 288d S. defines philosophy as the acquisition of *epistēmē*. Both in Plato and elsewhere one must translate *phronesis* and *sophia* as either 'knowledge' or 'wisdom' according to the context. Plato uses this feature of Greek language and thought to further the thesis that virtue is knowledge, and of course the knowledge which unites the virtues is not knowledge as understood by the ordinary man; but he did not invent it. The Greeks would have found it difficult to write an essay like Russell's on the difference between knowledge and wisdom, or a line like Tennyson's 'Knowledge comes but wisdom lingers'. They knew the difference (witness the great *Antigone* chorus, vv. 332-75), but could scarcely express it in those terms, save perhaps by an oxymoron (τὸ σοφὸν δ' οὐ σοφία, Eur. *Bacch.* 395). In reading Plato this is something that must be constantly borne in mind.

(3) THE EUTHYDEMUS

*Date.*<sup>1</sup> The prevailing opinion is that the *Euthydemus*, like the *Meno*, was written after the early Socratic dialogues and the *Protagoras*, but before the great central group. Its relation to the *Meno* is disputed,<sup>2</sup> but few would follow some earlier scholars in putting it after the *Phaedrus*. The strongest case for a latish date is probably Crombie's, who rightly notes that many of its interests overlap those of the *Sophist* and *Politicus*; but in themselves these puzzles, largely suggested by Parmenides, were familiar to Antisthenes and other contemporaries of Socrates, and they are here raised in an eristic context with no attempt at serious treatment. The absence of the Pythagorean themes of immortality and *anamnesis*, and virtually of mathematics, might incline one to put it before the *Meno*. These, it is true, would be out of place in an argument with two such mountebanks as Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, but why, we might ask, did Plato choose to show Socrates dealing with their elementary fallacies? The obvious motive, to defend him from the charge of being a similar figure himself, seems to link it with the *Apology* rather than with Plato's maturer works. The bare mention, without discussion, of the question whether virtue (274e) and *sophia* (282c) are teachable has been used to argue on both sides or neither.<sup>3</sup> One must also take into account the possible reference to the doctrine of Forms at 300d–301a (pp. 273 f., 278–80 below), the coincidences with the *Charmides*, so close as to look like cross-references from one dialogue to the other (pp. 272 f., 281), and the curiously casual and isolated reference to the sciences of mathematics and dialectic (pp. 272, 281 f.).

Perhaps the best conclusion is Crombie's: 'However, its date is not really important.' I deal with it now rather than earlier because it

<sup>1</sup> For ref. to past doubts of its authenticity see Keulen, *Unters.* 3 n. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ref. in Keulen, *o.c.* 49 n.

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Wilamowitz thought it showed *E.* was later than *M.*, *Pl.* 1, 303, 308 ('ihn [*Meno*] müssen wir im Gedächtnis haben'), 11, 252. Leisegang also (*RE* 2426) held that *E.* presupposes *M.* even while noting that its language associates it with the early group. Von Arnim on the other hand thought the contrary: the full treatment of the teachability of virtue is reserved for a later work, viz. *Meno* (*Jugendd.* 126). See also Bluck, *Meno* 113 f. Sprague (*Euth.* 21 n. 29) thinks the point has no bearing on the question of priority of composition, and Keulen (49 n. 28) suspends judgement.

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raises certain difficulties for which a knowledge of the dialogues so far considered, whether or not they were written earlier, will be helpful.

*Dramatic date.* The indications are: (1) it is 'many years' after the foundation of Thurii in 444 (271 c); (2) Socrates is old enough for Crito to be afraid he is too old to learn (272 b); (3) Protagoras appears to be dead (286 c) and Alcibiades (d. 404) is alive (275 a). It is therefore between about 420 and 404, and in view of Crito's reference to Socrates's age (more striking than his own in the *Lysis*, p. 135 above), probably nearer the latter.<sup>1</sup>

*Scene and characters.* Like other dialogues concerned with the education of a boy the main conversation is set in a palaestra or gymnasium, in this case the Lyceum, and, like the *Lysis*, in the dressing-room, the other participants being the boy Clinias, Ctesippus (cf. pp. 135 f. above), and the brothers Euthydemus and Dionysodorus. But the whole work is a skilful blending of the direct and reported forms. Socrates is narrating the conversation to his old friend Crito, who however does not merely listen to it but breaks in half way through and himself continues the discussion with Socrates, and at the end makes comments which elicit further comment in return. In this way we see the two Sophists through different pairs of eyes: their own, which reflect unbounded delight in their cleverness, those of Socrates, who lauds them to the skies but gets in some pointed rejoinders, of Ctesippus who loses his temper with them, and of honest Crito who in spite of his respect for Socrates, seriously doubts his wisdom in becoming involved with such dubious characters.

Like *Lysis* and *Charmides*, the boy Clinias was well born, in fact the cousin of Alcibiades (275 a). Euthydemus is distinguished from Protagoras in the *Cratylus* (386 d) as holding that 'all things are alike to all men at the same time and always', and Aristotle names him twice

<sup>1</sup> Taylor's inference (*PMW* 90) that the conversation must be supposed to take place before the profanation of the mysteries in 415, which led to the banishment of Axiochus the father of Clinias, does not seem compelling. Jowett's editors (*Dialogues* 1, 202 n. 1) give no reason for their surprisingly early date between 430 and 420.

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as the author of sophisms which are not taken from our dialogue.<sup>1</sup> Since he is a historical figure, his elder brother (283 a) must be also, and though Dionysodorus was a common name, he is probably the same as the teacher of strategy criticized by Socrates at Xen. *Mem.* 3.1.<sup>2</sup> Plato's own information about them is very circumstantial (271 c): born on Chios, joined the new colony of Thurii (vol. III, 139, 264), were exiled from it, and at the time of the dialogue had lived for some years 'in our parts'.<sup>3</sup>

### *The dialogue*

#### *(Mixed direct and reported form)*

Crito asks Socrates whom he was talking to yesterday in the Lyceum – the man next but one on S.'s right, with Clinias (a fine-looking boy that) between them. It was Euthydemus, and immediately on S.'s left was his brother Dionysodorus. They are a marvellous pair. Formerly professional teachers of armed combat, they turned to legal fighting and the teaching of forensic oratory. Their latest, crowning achievement is the art of refuting whatever is said, be it true or false. S. is enchanted, wants to become their pupil and hopes Cr. will do the same. Cr. would like to know more about what he is likely to learn, and S. begins his story. So we are launched on the main discussion.

Clinias, with a number of admirers including Ctesippus ('a handsome youth with the insolence of his years'), comes and sits beside him just after the brothers had arrived with a crowd of pupils. When S. praises them for their earlier accomplishments they laugh. These are now mere sidelines: their present claim is that they can impart *aretē* better and more quickly than anyone, and they have come to exhibit this skill and acquire pupils. S., shaken by the sheer magnitude of the claim, but assured of its truth, envies them more than the Great King

<sup>1</sup> *Soph. el.* 177b12, *Rhet.* 1401a24. There are also two mentions of him in Sextus (*Math.* 7.13, 64), but as Gifford says (*Euthyd.* 46), these can hardly add weight to contemporary testimony. This Euthydemus must of course be distinguished from the young friend of Socrates to whom Critias behaved so badly (vol. III, 390, 443, 463f.).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Euthyd.* 273c: The brothers 'know all about war, everything necessary to make a man a good general'.

<sup>3</sup> *περί τούσδε τοὺς τόπους*, a vague phrase which Taylor (*PMW* 91) interpreted as meaning Athens and her dependencies, i.e. the Aegean islands, but Grote (I, 528) supposed them resident at Athens.

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his throne. He would only ask, must an intending pupil be already satisfied that virtue can be taught, or does their skill extend to making a man good who believes either that it cannot be taught or that they are not teachers of it?<sup>1</sup> They can do that too, so S. concludes that they must be best not only at *teaching* 'philosophy and virtue' but at instilling the desire to learn it; and he begs that for the sake of Cl. they will confine their *epideixis* to this theme and direct it at him.

Since *aretē* for them means the ability to get the better of other people, E. began with a demonstration of their new art of refutation, asking Cl. whether those who learn are the wise or the ignorant.<sup>2</sup> He plunges for 'the wise', and is immediately asked whether the boys at school already knew what they learned. No, so he admits it is the ignorant who learned. But when the master rattles off a lesson, who learn it (pick it up)? The wise, so the last answer was wrong. (Cheers and laughter from the Sophist's supporters.) Next, do learners learn what they know or what they don't know? Cl. chooses the latter. But does not Cl. know all his letters? And does not what his teacher says consist of letters? So if he learns (or understands)<sup>3</sup> what the teacher says he learns what he knew already. D. picks up the ball and soon shows that Cl. was wrong to admit this, since learning means acquiring knowledge and one does not acquire what one has already got.

Before E. can launch a third attack, S. comes to the boy's rescue. So far, he says, the Sophists have only been playing with him, as in the first stage of initiation. His full initiation into the 'Sophistic mysteries' will come later. All-important is a proper understanding of language. They wanted Cl. to see, for instance, that the Greek word for learn (*μανθάνειν*) is used both for acquiring new knowledge and for making use of the knowledge one has (which latter is more often called understanding, *συνιέναι*), and so can be applied in different senses both to

<sup>1</sup> The man is of course S. himself. Compare his opening move against Protagoras (*Prot.* 319a-b): 'A splendid art, if you really have it... I say this because I did not think it could be taught.'

<sup>2</sup> The adjectives are *σοφοί* and *ἄσοφους*. The Sophists play on the ambiguity of these terms, *σοφός* meaning both *knowing* a subject – or possessing a skill – and *wise*, and *ἄσοφός* both *ignorant* and *stupid*. See p. 265 above. The Socratic answer to this unreal dilemma is at *Lys.* 218a-b.

<sup>3</sup> *μανθάνειν* means both, as S. will shortly point out (277e-278b).

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the knowing and not-knowing. Here Plato gives his straightforward opinion of such methods:

I call it play because however much of this sort of thing a man may learn, he will be none the wiser about how things are, but only able to make fun of people, tripping them up by verbal distinctions like those who enjoy pulling away a chair from someone as he sits down and laugh to see him up-ended on his back.

Let the Sophists now call a halt to play, and fulfil their promise to arouse in Cl. a concern for wisdom and virtue. In his own amateurish way, S. will try to show them the sort of thing he means. He too works by question and answer, with the following result.

To fare well one needs many good things – wealth, health, good birth, power and honours. May we add moral virtues and wisdom (*sophia*)? Yes. There is also good fortune, but that is not a separate category because in every occupation the expert (*sophos*) enjoys better fortune than anyone else.<sup>1</sup> Now happiness does not depend on the *possession* of good things, but on their *use*, and what enables us to use them aright is knowledge. Without it, other possessions can be actively harmful, and the less one has of them the less harm they can do. In themselves neutral, they are bad if employed ignorantly, good if wisely. Knowledge or wisdom then (*sophia*) is the one thing necessary for happiness, and one must make every possible effort to acquire it, importuning father, friends, fellow-citizens or foreigners to impart it and undertaking any honourable service in return – that is, if it can be taught. Cl. believes it can, and S. thanks him for saving them from a long investigation. This being so, does Cl. agree that philosophy (the search for wisdom) is paramount, and intend to pursue it himself? ‘With all my might.’

There, said S., you have my amateur effort at the sort of exhortation to virtue and knowledge which I want to hear transformed by your

<sup>1</sup> The equation of good fortune with wisdom or expertise is dubious perhaps, but highly moral, an extension of ‘fortune favours the brave’. It is also authentically Socratic: wisdom cannot err. (At *Meno* 99a chance is similarly excluded from the factors that make for success, but on the grounds that its results ‘are not due to human direction’.) But there is also a difference between Greek and English (or German; Bonitz, *Plat. St.* 251 n.) idiom. *τύχη* and *εὐτυχία*, chance and good fortune, are from the same root as *τυγχάνειν*, to hit the mark. So S. says at 280a that *σοφία* must always *ὁρθῶς πράττειν καὶ τυγχάνειν*, or it would not be *σοφία*.

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professional skill. The response of the professors is to assert that in wanting Cl. to become wise, his friends want him to *be no longer* what he is, and since to 'be no longer' is to die, this must be what they wish for him. Ct. accuses them of lying, whereat E. proves that lying is impossible because he who speaks must speak (say) something; this must be something which *is* (or it would be nothing), and he who says what is speaks truth.<sup>1</sup> Ct. retorts that nevertheless liars do not speak of things *as* they are. D. interprets the phrase as meaning that e.g. to speak of warm things as they are is to speak of them warmly. Ct. replies with an insult, and S. intervenes to keep the peace. Let them not quarrel over words. If E. and D. mean by destroying someone making him a better man (and this they claim to do) by all means let them do so – or at least try it out on S. himself as a *corpus vile*. Ct. protests that he was not being abusive: contradiction is not abuse. D. promptly proves that there is no such thing as contradiction, by a development of the previous thesis that falsehood is impossible.<sup>2</sup>

S. now moves over to the attack. The argument, he says, is a familiar Protagorean one.<sup>3</sup> Do they really believe it? Challenged to refute it, he retorts that on their own argument refutation is impossible, for no one can be wrong. But if no one ever errs, in action as in thought (to which E. agrees), then (with many apologies for the crudity of his question) what on earth is left for the Sophists to teach?<sup>4</sup> D. can only make the feeble retort that S. should not bring up what they said earlier because he is baffled by what they say now. This, S. replies, certainly *is* baffling, for does not 'baffled by' mean 'unable to refute'? After an altercation

<sup>1</sup> A supporting argument (284b–c) depends on the ambiguity of the Greek ποιεῖν, as meaning both 'do' (like πράττειν) and 'make'. Sprague aptly quotes *As You Like It*. Oliver: What make you here? Orlando: Nothing. I am not taught to make anything. (*Euth.* 24 n. 35.)

<sup>2</sup> The deception here lies in the ambiguity of the word ὥς (strikingly illustrated by modern disputes as to its meaning in Protagoras's 'man the measure' fragment; see vol. III, 189f.). After 'Are there statements about every existing thing?' (285 e), D.'s subsequent question could mean either 'that it exists or doesn't exist?' or 'Describing it as it is or as it is not?' So he can go on, 'We proved that no one λέγει ὥς οὐκ ἔστι because no one says what is not.' Then the only alternatives are the three which he enumerates. On the Eleatic premise that no one says the thing which is not, the remaining alternative, which Sprague calls 'the crucial case' (*Euth.* 28 n. 44), cannot arise; for if, in her words, D. 'speaks the description of the thing whereas Ct. speaks another of the same thing', one of them must be speaking ὥς οὐκ ἔστι, equated with τὸ μὴ ὄν λέγειν, which is impossible.

<sup>3</sup> See vol. III, 182 with n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> At *Th.* 161d this criticism is levelled at Protagoras himself and his doctrine that what appears to each one is true for him.



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over who should answer whose questions, D. trips S. up over asking 'what a phrase means'<sup>1</sup> and S. replies that if he was right he can't be refuted and if he was wrong they are refuted who say that to be wrong is impossible. Their position is self-refuting. Ct. throws in another insult, and to keep the peace S. assures him that the brothers are behaving like Proteus and they must wait patiently till they appear in their true shape. Meanwhile, to spur them on, he will resume his own discussion with Cl.<sup>2</sup>

They had agreed on the need to pursue philosophy, defined as acquisition of knowledge, that the knowledge must be such as to do us good, and that goodness consists in the right use of what one has acquired or made. The special arts concern *either* making (the lyre-maker) *or* use (the player), but the knowledge we seek must combine both. Even speech-writers often have no idea how to use their compositions. Perhaps the art of generalship is what we are looking for. Cl. thinks not. Generals, he says, are like hunters, who don't know what to do with their prey when they have it but hand it over to the cooks. One may say the same of mathematicians and astronomers, who only *make* discoveries and then (if they are wise) hand them over to the dialecticians to use. So generals, when they have captured a city or camp, hand it over to the politicians, not knowing what to do with it themselves.

At this point Crito breaks in to express incredulity that the boy could have said all this. S. with an innocent air suggests that it may have been 'some higher being', and Cr. ironically agrees. And did they, he asks, find the art they were looking for? Not a bit of it. In the end they tried statesmanship or kingship, but found themselves going round in circles. They agreed it must have some product, like medicine or farming, and that product must be good. The kingly art can give the citizens wealth, freedom, unity, but these belong to the indifferent class. Only knowledge, we now know, is invariably beneficial. So it must make the citizens good and wise, but with what knowledge? Not

<sup>1</sup> What *voē* is alive, phrases are not alive, so it makes no sense to ask what a phrase *voē* (287d). Actually *voēiv* was used like the English 'mean'. 'What do you mean?' and 'What does this sentence mean?' are equally intelligible questions, and so with *voēiv*.

<sup>2</sup> It is of course again in question-and-answer form, with Cl.'s agreement obtained at every step.

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of a special craft like carpentry. All they could think of was that it must be knowledge of itself, namely the knowledge how to make others good, and so on *ad infinitum*. They had failed again, and had to appeal to the 'Heavenly Twins' once more.

Thus encouraged, E. undertakes to prove that S. already has the knowledge he is seeking, because whoever knows anything (and S. admits he knows a few trivial things) knows everything, for no one can be knowing and not knowing at the same time. Further, he had this knowledge 'when he was born and even before it, and before earth and sky existed'. S. tries to introduce the qualifications which would expose the fallacy, but is bullied into abandoning them, thus: 'Do you know what you know by something?' 'Yes, the mind.' 'I didn't ask *what* you know by. Do you know by something?' 'Yes.' 'Do you always know by that something?' 'Yes, when I know.' 'That wasn't the question. Do you always know by something?' 'Yes.' 'Then you always know.' Again S. attacks, by saying that, if he knows everything, he must know that good men are unjust. Where did he learn that? 'Nowhere', says D. incautiously, and is jumped on by his brother for ruining the argument. Catching at a straw, D. leads them into more verbal clowning. Since S.'s father is not father of his half-brother, he is 'not a father', so S. has no father. Alternatively, being a father he is father of everyone, because one cannot be both a father and not a father. Ct. has a dog. The dog is a father. Therefore it is Ct.'s father. As similar arguments fall thick and fast, Ct. begins to get the hang of it: the Scythians had the pleasant habit of gilding their enemies' skulls and using them as drinking-cups. Since they now own the skulls, says Ct., they are drinking out of their own skulls. E. retorts with a fallacy dependent on Greek idiom.<sup>1</sup>

S. rebukes Cl. for laughing at 'such beautiful things', whereat D. asks him if beautiful things are the same as beauty. 'No, but each has some beauty present to it.' 'Then if an ox is present to you, you are an ox. How can a thing be different because of the presence of something different?' S. (confessing that he himself was beginning to imitate the

<sup>1</sup> (a) In the phrase δυνατὰ ὁρᾶν, ὁρᾶν can be either active or passive. Anything visible is δυνατὸν ὁρᾶν, therefore it can itself see. (b) σιγῶντα λέγειν can mean 'to speak of what is silent' or 'for the silent to speak'. The ambiguity of the acc. and inf. construction is used again by D. in his interpretation of τὸν μάγειρον κατακόπτειν as 'to cut up the cook'.

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others' cleverness) replies that even a child knows that the different is different and not the same,<sup>1</sup> and this argument not surprisingly drops. D., catching, in his usual manner when defeated, at a casual reference of S. to his 'craftsmanship', produces another piece of silliness dependent on the Greek construction for *oratio obliqua*, and adds that since S. can do what he likes with living creatures that are his, he can do what he likes with his household gods. The comedy ends with the triumph of the brothers amid wild applause from their followers, and S. shows himself a master of the back-handed compliment, congratulating them not only on their wisdom but also on their magnificent disregard of public opinion (since most people would be ashamed to use such arguments) and their magnanimity in stopping up their own mouths as well as other people's; above all for so perfecting their art that it can be quickly picked up by anyone, as Ct. has shown.

The narration is followed by a conversation in which Crito mentions an unnamed bystander who had censured S.'s indulgence of such worthless and ridiculous creatures, who nevertheless wield great influence. S. does not know him, but hearing that he writes speeches, concludes that he is one of those who are a cross between philosopher and statesman and inferior to either. They attack people like E. and D. because they are afraid of them. In any case Cr. must not be put off philosophy by the inadequacy of those who practise it. In every occupation there are far more incompetents than masters.

*Comment*

The dialogue is carefully constructed: three rounds of comic logomachy with the eristics, alternating with a serious demonstration in two stages of how Socrates would lead a young man into the path of knowledge and goodness. It contains the earliest extant example of the 'protreptic discourse' or exhortation to philosophy (προτρεπτικός λόγος), which seems to have been already a recognized genre in the time of the Sophists. Works with that title were written not only by Aristotle and later writers but by Antisthenes,<sup>2</sup> and several of Iso-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 278 n. 2 below.

<sup>2</sup> D.L. 6.16. For Isocr. see Düring, *Ar.'s Protr.* 20-3. [Isocr.] *Demon.* 3 (prob. c. 340, see *RE* xviii. Halbb. 2196) speaks of ὅσοι τοὺς προτρεπτικούς λόγους συγγράφουσι.

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crates's writings are of the type. Socrates himself claims to have offered 'a pattern for protreptic discourses'.<sup>1</sup> While illustrating his method like other dialogues, this one serves the particular purpose of showing how sharply it contrasted with those of the men whom Plato condemned as eristics but with whom, in the eyes of many, Socrates was identified. It is their 'eristic skill' which at 272b Socrates says that he longs to acquire. This word 'eristic' was so freely bandied about that it might be said that one man's philosophy was another man's eristic: *I pursue truth, you simply want a cheap victory in disputation.* In the eyes of Isocrates, Plato and other Socratics were as much eristics as any Sophist was to Plato.<sup>2</sup> It was therefore vital for Plato to *demonstrate* the difference between eristic and Socratic dialectic. At the same time, by contrasting their treatment of a gifted and impressionable youth, he rebuts the charge that Socrates corrupted the young, recalled when he says 'He is young, and we fear...that someone...may corrupt him' (275b).

*Socrates and eristic.* That difference was real and important but by no means obvious; and Plato must have been uncomfortably aware that it had been obscured by some of his own dialogues. The resemblance extended beyond the formal similarity that both proceeded by brief question and answer (on which he himself makes Socrates insist at *Prot.* 334d and *Gorg.* 449b).<sup>3</sup> It cannot be denied that some of the equivocations and unreal dilemmas which Plato shows up with such gusto in the *Euthydemus* are used by Socrates himself in other dialogues, no doubt with historical fidelity. The method was to demand an exclusive choice between two alternatives when what is needed is the insertion of a qualification or a recognition that a word is being used ambiguously (as in Euthydemus's question whether those who learn are the wise or the ignorant). Socrates uses this device in *H. Min.*,

<sup>1</sup> 282d, παράδειγμα τῶν προτρεπτικῶν λόγων.

<sup>2</sup> See the informative excursus on eristic in Thompson's *Meno* 272–85. Some Platonic references to it are collected by Gifford, *Euth.* 42f. Cf. also Grote, *Pl.* 1, 554 n. 1: 'The Platonic critics talk about the Eristics (as they do about the Sophists) as if that name designated a known and definite class of persons. This is altogether misleading. The term is vituperative, and was applied by different persons according to their own tastes.'

<sup>3</sup> On the importance of this for the eristic's success see Keulen, 72f.

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when in proving his point that voluntary sinners are better than involuntary he makes Hippias agree that an archer who voluntarily misses is *better* than one who cannot help it. Hippias's qualifying 'in archery, yes' (375 b) is overruled, as Euthydemus overrules Socrates's own attempt to add to the clause 'You *always know* by the same means' the qualification 'yes, when I do know'. Similarly in *H. Maj.* Hippias is made to choose one only of the two alternatives: Does beauty make things to *be*, or only to *appear*, beautiful? (P. 185 above.) At *Euthyd.* 284 c Euthydemus plays on the ambiguity of ποιεῖν ('make' or 'do'), but at *Charm.* 163 b it is Socrates who needs to be reminded that it is not synonymous with πράττειν. Examples could be multiplied, especially from the *Lysis*. It looks as if Plato realized that in trying to show that Socrates was tactically more than a match for the Sophists at the eristic game, even if for very different ends, he had laid himself open to misunderstanding. A dialogue must be written to show that he despised their tricks and saw through their fallacies. So to this 'eristic and combative' activity he now opposes 'dialectic', which we have already met in the *Meno* as 'a gentler method of discussion between friends'.<sup>1</sup>

*The eristic arguments.* The absurdity of the fallacies by which the brothers refute everyone 'whether he speaks the truth or not' is obvious from the summary, and they have been fully dealt with by others.<sup>2</sup> Many of them are discussed in Aristotle's *Sophistic Refutations*, of which Cousin said that it 'n'est pas autre chose que l'Euthydème réduit en formules générales'.<sup>3</sup> To compare the two illustrates well the difference between systematic treatises and Plato's philosophical dramas, and the consequent difficulties of getting at Plato's real mind.

<sup>1</sup> *Meno* 75 d. See p. 248 n. 1 above. It is also that for which S. makes a plea at *Prot.* 348 d.

<sup>2</sup> See especially Sprague, *PUF* ch. 1, Robinson, *Essays* no. 2, 'P.'s Consciousness of Fallacy', Crombie, *EPD* II, 488 f. As Sprague says (*Euthyd.* xiii), many of them depend on peculiarities of Greek vocabulary, idiom, and syntax. Grote nevertheless pointed out that though P.'s examples are ridiculous because their conclusions are known to be false, the types of fallacy illustrated, arising from ambiguity, from shifting a dicto secundum quid ad dictum simpliciter, from petitio principii, ignoratio elenchi etc. are forms of error to which the human mind is constantly prone. True, an argument like 'Your dog, being a father, is your father' (one of those cited by Grote) might well get past if put as a general formula ( $x$  is a  $y$ ;  $x$  is yours; therefore  $x$  is your  $y$ ), but it is a pity Grote did not quote example for example.

<sup>3</sup> For modern literature and a list of identical sophisms see Keulen, 18 n. 22.

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Most of the fallacies result from either a literal application of, or else a reaction against, the dicta of Parmenides (*a*) that the verb 'to be' has only one meaning, namely 'to exist', and cannot be qualified, (*b*) that no one can perceive or speak of what is not. (*a*) leads to the assertion that Clinias's friends want him 'no longer to be';<sup>1</sup> (*b*) was used by Antisthenes to prove the impossibility of false statement (cf. *Euthyd.* 283 e) and contradiction (285 d), 'what is not' in the sense of a non-existent object being confused with what is not the case. (Cf. Ctesippus's criticism at 284 c, never answered by the brothers: 'He speaks the things that are, but not *as* they are.') Protagoras, however, had based the same tenet on his own anti-Parmenidean thesis that whatever anyone believed was true.<sup>2</sup> The difficulty of accounting for false statement or belief was at the time a serious epistemological crux, and Plato did not tackle it thoroughly until the *Sophist*. He does however leave the reader in no doubt that Socrates saw through the logical tricks. Among his criticisms to which the brothers have no answer are: (1) *μανθάνειν* is ambiguous (to acquire information and to understand, 277 e–278 a); (2) the thesis that error is impossible (*a*) undermines their claim to be teachers, (*b*) destroys itself, because if it is true Socrates cannot be mistaken when he disbelieves them (adduced against Protagoras's 'man the measure' at *Tht.* 171 a–c); (3) if he knows everything he must know something untrue (296 e). He also repeatedly tries to put in the necessary qualifications to Parmenidean disjunctions.

Two of the eristic hits have a special interest. When Euthydemus proves by childish fallacious means (stripping 'you always know' of its qualifications, 296 a–c) that Socrates has known everything before he was born, even 'before earth and heaven came into being', it sounds ridiculous, but at the same time is not very different from what Socrates said about Meno's slave: 'If he always possessed the knowledge, he must always have known.' He did not acquire his opinions in his life, therefore 'he possessed and had learned them at some other

<sup>1</sup> Cf. also Melissus's argument against change (fr. 8.6): 'If what is changes, what is has perished, and what is not has come into being' (borrowed by Gorgias; see [Arist.] *MXG* 979b28).

<sup>2</sup> For Parmenides see vol. II, 27f., 73ff., and for the impossibility of contradiction vol. III, 182 (Protagoras) and 210ff. (Antisthenes). It is introduced again in the *Crat.* (429d). A rich list of sources on the origins of eristic is given by Keulen, 77 n. 68.

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period . . . when he was not a man'. So 'may we say that the soul has been for all time in a state of knowledge?'<sup>1</sup>

*The Euthydemus and the Forms.* Even more interesting is 301a-c. Asked whether beautiful objects are identical with the beautiful, Socrates replies that they are not, but that 'there is present to each of them some beauty'. 'Then', says Dionysodorus, 'if an ox is present with you are you an ox? How can one thing be made different simply by the presence of something different?' His reduction of Socrates's statement to absurdity depends on the substitution of a physical particular for a universal form. To reproduce it fairly, he would have had to speak of 'oxness', not an ox, and this of course alters the meaning of presence,<sup>2</sup> used by Socrates to express the relationship of a subject to its attribute, as whiteness is present to hair (*Lys.* 217d). At the same time, the question must surely be raised in a reader's mind: If beauty is not present in beautiful things in the sense in which an ox might be present in the same field with me, in what sense is it present? Is it a metaphor, and if so does the metaphor stand for a real state of affairs? Are there really two things, a beautiful picture and beauty, and if so, how *are* they related? In the *Lysis* (p. 151 above) and *Gorgias* (497e 'Do you not call beautiful those to whom beauty is present?'), Socrates has no qualms, but in the *Phaedo* Plato makes him much more cautious. What I cling to, perhaps foolishly (he says at 100d), is this, that it is beauty that makes things beautiful, *whether by its presence or*

<sup>1</sup> *Meno* 85d-86a. The thesis of H. Keulen's recent study of the *Euthyd.* is that serious Platonic themes show through the sophisms of E. and D. (see p. 3). P. is playing a double game (p. 59), his aim being not solely to ridicule the eristics but also to pursue throughout the discussion a 'most artistically concealed' set of themes. The question remains *why* he should take pains to conceal his own thoughts under fallacies in themselves absurd, and the answer suggested here is that he needed to bring out the essential difference, underneath a superficial resemblance, between eristic and Socraticism. (A hint of this is dropped by K. in the middle of a footnote, p. 59 n. 71, but never developed.)

<sup>2</sup> As Sprague points out, *PUF* 26, *Phron.* 1967, 93. On the other hand her translation of his following sentence (301a8-9) makes no sense, and she says that D. is speaking 'cryptically indeed' (*Euthyd.* 56 and 57). Translated as above, which seems to me the natural way, it is simply a generalization of the question about the ox. How can something, simply by being in the presence of something else, *alter* that thing? On the other hand S.'s answer (in which he says he is trying to copy the eristics) is deliberate nonsense effected by wilful confusion between difference and what is different (both in Greek τὸ ἕτερον). Sprague offers an explanation in *PUF* 27.

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*communion or whatever the relationship may be*: for I don't go so far as to dogmatize on that.

I too would not dogmatize, but I have the impression that Plato is beginning to see difficulties in the Socratic habit of explaining predication in terms of abstract nouns (or synonymous article-plus-adjective phrases, p. 225 above). He clung to it, indeed entrenched it more firmly when he made the Forms transcendent, but the question of the relation between Forms and particulars dogged him all his life, and the first hint of it is here. For Plato's immediate purpose, however, both this and the 'knowing everything and always' paradox are further examples to show how close to eristic quibbling the teaching of Socrates might appear, yet how far apart the two are in reality.

Whether this passage contains a reference to the full 'theory of Forms', as developed by Plato in the *Phaedo* and *Symposium*, is by no means agreed.<sup>1</sup> Wilamowitz (*Pl.* II, 157-9) saw here no trace of the Platonic doctrine (the joke depends simply on the 'grammatic-logical relationship' of subject and predicate), yet was convinced that Plato already had in mind what he gave expression to in the *Phaedo*. It would simply have been unsuitable in the present company. This latter conclusion is based on a less than compelling comparison with *Crat.* 389b, but he does make the important point that the language of that passage shows how close to ordinary thinking the doctrine of Forms is (or as I should prefer to say, sounds). I do not myself see that there is anything here which takes us beyond the position of the *Lysis* or *H. Major*, of which I have spoken already. The only relevant expressions occur in one or both of these.<sup>2</sup> Plato is chiefly concerned to protect the memory of Socrates from the stigma of eristic, and the whole spirit of the dialogue is Socratic. Clinias is another Charmides, there is an almost rollicking element of comedy, and no trace of the high

<sup>1</sup> Gifford p. 59 quotes Zeller's claim to find in it 'not merely, with Steinhart, "a close approximation to the doctrine of ideas", but the actual enunciation of this doctrine'; but he agrees rather with Stallbaum 'who sees here only the *logical* doctrine of universals as held by Socrates, on which P. afterwards founded his *metaphysical* doctrine of "Ideas"'. Friedlander (*Pl.* II, 192), whom Sprague follows, agreed with those who see 'an undeniable reference to what is called "P.'s theory of forms"', but Ritter (*Essence* 101 n. 3) thought the indefinite κάλλος τι inappropriate to this.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 150ff., 188ff. I am well aware how far the above considerations fall short of proof, and readers may be reminded of some remarks in ch. III, 2 (Chronology).



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spiritual and religious tone introduced briefly in the *Meno* and pervading so much of the great central dialogues.

*The Socratic protreptic.* Socrates wants to see Clinias persuaded of the need to pursue philosophy and virtue (275 a). His demonstration of how to set about it is described in two parts (278 e–282 d and 288 d–292 e). The first is indeed pure protreptic. Instead of frightening the boy off, it leads him gently on to an enthusiastic avowal of the need for philosophy and his determination to pursue it. In the argument the word which we translate ‘knowledge’, and those which we more naturally render ‘wisdom’ or ‘good sense’ are practically identified.<sup>1</sup> This accords with Greek usage but, as we have seen (p. 265 above), had a special significance for Socrates. Here it ensures that Clinias will agree immediately that it is teachable, just as Meno assents to the proposition that knowledge is the one thing that can be taught, therefore if virtue is knowledge it is teachable (*Meno* 87 c). Clinias is not directly asked whether *aretē* is teachable, only whether knowledge is (282 c), but since only knowledge ensures a good and happy life, the Socratic identification of virtue and knowledge is obviously implied. As in the *Protagoras*, Socrates has strongly hinted that he does not think it can be taught (274 e). How his idea of knowledge differed from the Sophistic, and how it was to be acquired, we have seen in the *Meno*. The main thread of this argument too, about the dependence of benefit on right use, is duplicated in the *Meno* (p. 239 above).<sup>2</sup>

When we come to the second part, the protreptic has done its work. Clinias’s zeal for inquiry is assured, and he can be taken through a Socratic investigation, ending as always in apparent failure, with no risk of his losing heart. Indeed Socrates (though with a twinkle in his eye)<sup>3</sup> represents him as making important, and typically Socratic,

<sup>1</sup> Since ἐπιστήμη guarantees well-doing, other things are worthless without σοφία and φρόνησις (281 b); φιλοσοφία is κτήσις ἐπιστήμης (288 d).

<sup>2</sup> For the apparent inclusion of moral virtues among ‘goods’ which can be misused (279 b), see p. 260 n. 1 above.

<sup>3</sup> We may share Cr.’s incredulity at 290 e, and can perhaps imagine how the conversation would really have run, e.g.: S. Does a hunter deal with the quails he kills? Cl. No. S. Who does then? Cl. The cook. S. And does a general himself order a city that he has captured? Cl. No. S. Who then? Cl. The politicians. S. Then can we call generalship an art that both acquires, or makes, and uses? Cl. No. S., of course, has done nothing but ask questions: the statements come from Cl.!

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contributions of his own. What, they ask, is the art which, being concerned with use as well as acquiring or making, will ensure happiness? The important suggestion is of course the last; namely the kingly or political art.<sup>1</sup> This founders, however, on arguments used in the *Charmides* about *sophrosynē*. What is its product, and what is its content? As a useful or beneficial art, it must produce something<sup>2</sup> as medicine produces health and agriculture food. (At *Charm.* 165 c–d the examples are medicine and building.) This something must be good, but we have shown that the only essentially good thing is knowledge. Statesmanship, then, must produce knowledge for the citizens, but not knowledge of any special craft like cobbling or architecture.<sup>3</sup> It can only be knowledge of itself (292 d), exactly like *sophrosynē* in the *Charmides*; that is, it makes men good and wise by teaching them how to make men good and wise. This gets us nowhere. We are going round in circles,<sup>4</sup> and the value of statesmanship has escaped us, as did that of *sophrosynē*. This is serious argument on a Socratic level, teaching the same lesson as the *Charmides* and other Socratic dialogues (pp. 173 f. above). For Plato's solution to the problem of the ideal statesman and his education we must wait until the *Republic*, but may remind ourselves of what we have read in the *Meno* (pp. 261–3 above): existing statesmen owe their success to lucky conjecture, and if anyone *could* educate another in the political art, he would seem a being from a higher world.

Finally, the most advanced piece of Platonic thinking in the dialogue is thrown out as a mere illustration among others. Clinias–Socrates is distinguishing between the arts of acquiring and using. Like hunters who hand over their catch to the chef, so (290c) 'geometers, astronomers and calculators (who are themselves a kind of hunters, not

<sup>1</sup> Called πολιτική τέχνη at 291c, a reminder that it is what Protagoras claimed to teach (*Prot.* 319a).

<sup>2</sup> τί ἡμῖν ἀπεργάζεται ἔργον, 291 d–e, τί ἀπεργάζεται, 292a, σωφροσύνη... τί καλὸν ἡμῖν ἀπεργάζεται ἔργον; *Charm.* 165 d–e.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Charm.* 174a–b: none of these skills makes for happiness. But at *Prot.* 324e it is Protagoras who says that one thing is needed for life in communities, 'and this is not building or metal-work or pottery but justice, moderation and piety'. There were Sophists who were not frauds, and P. does them justice.

<sup>4</sup> 291 b ὥσπερ εἰς λαβύρινθον ἐμπεσόντες... περικάμψαντες πάλιν. So at *Charm.* 174b πάλαι με περιέλκεις κύκλῳ.

creating their diagrams but discovering what already exists<sup>1</sup>), not knowing how to use the prey themselves, hand it over to the dialecticians to deal with unless they are fools'.

So far we have met dialectic and its cognates only in the sense of amicably cooperative discussion as opposed to eristic (p. 248 n. 1 above). Here the dialectician is the possessor of a science superior to the mathematician's. Its superiority is elaborately explained in the *Republic* (510c-511c): the mathematician seeks reality through visible media and a set of postulates – odd and even, the regular figures, three kinds of angle and so on – which he cannot transcend. The dialectician leaves the visible world behind for a realm of pure intelligence. He does not accept the postulates unquestioningly as first principles but tests them in their turn, and using them like the lowest rungs of a ladder, rises to the genuinely first, 'unhypothetical' principle on which depend both the reality and the intelligibility of being.<sup>2</sup> All this need not have been in Plato's mind here. The main point (and we have seen it made in the *Meno*, p. 251) is that the mathematicians discovered in their own sphere the existence of a reality, obeying immutable laws, behind the phenomenal world which is its unsteady reflection. The dialectician uses this discovery to demonstrate truths like the immortality of the soul and its pre-natal knowledge, and the reality and stability of moral principles; for the hypothetical first principle is the Form of the Good.

ADDITIONAL NOTE: THE IDENTITY OF  
SOCRATES'S UNNAMED CRITIC

The man described by Crito and Socrates at 305c ff. has been variously identified with Isocrates, Antisthenes, Antiphon, Thrasyarchus, and Polycrates, and also said to represent a type rather than an individual.<sup>3</sup> Of the

<sup>1</sup> At *Rep.* 510d-e it is explained that geometers are not thinking of the visible figures which they draw, but are seeking (ζητούντες) to discover the realities (cf. τὰ ὄντα ἀνευρίσκουσι here) which can only be seen by the mind, the perfect 'square itself' and 'diagonal itself'. The inclusion of astronomy is explained by *Rep.* 529c-530b: the astronomer should treat the visible heavenly bodies not as the final objects of his study, but, like geometrical diagrams, as instructional models of reality, and give his attention to the problems in pure mathematics to which they point the way.

<sup>2</sup> The relationship is well and simply explained by Jackson in *J. of Philol.* 1881, 143f. See also pp. 509-12 below.

<sup>3</sup> Some reff. are in Friedländer, *Pl.* II, 338 n. 25. Thrasyarchus was Winckelmann's choice (Gifford 17).

## *The Euthydemus*

last opinion were Wilamowitz, Bluck (*Meno* 115 n. 4) and Friedländer (*Pl.* II, 194), who says that he represents 'the many, who do not know how to distinguish between eristic and dialectic and who scorn Socrates because Euthydemus is so contemptible. . . The *Euthydemus* is meant to clear up this confusion.' Wilamowitz thought he stood for rhetoric in general, both forensic and political, which were never united in the same person.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the description has touches which certainly sound individual, as when Crito quotes a very artificially constructed sentence and emphasizes that he is giving the man's own words.<sup>2</sup> The majority of scholars favour Isocrates, the case for whom has never been presented better than by Thompson.<sup>3</sup> Taylor rejected this (*PMW* 101) on the ground that at the date at which the conversation was supposed to take place, Isocrates was only a boy. Apart from the fact that he probably put this date too early (p. 267 n. 1 above), his point is in effect answered by Jowett's editors when they say (*Dialogues* I, 202 n. 1) that Isocrates 'could not have been *named* in a dialogue which is evidently supposed to take place. . . when he was still a boy'. It can hardly be doubted that in defending the Socratic philosophy Plato took account of the criticisms of his own contemporaries, but as Field put it (*P. and Contemps.* 193) he 'avoids the formal anachronism by not mentioning any name in connexion with them'; and one may agree with his further conclusion: 'Would not anyone who read the *Euthydemus* when it was published have thought of Isocrates when he read the passage? If Plato realized, as he must have done, what his portrait would suggest to his readers, and yet took no steps to guard against it, we can hardly deny that the allusion was intentional.'

<sup>1</sup> *Pl.* I, 304. (See also 299.) His arguments against identification with Isocrates are at II, 165-7.

<sup>2</sup> 304e περί οὐδενὸς ἀξιῶν ἀναξίαν σπουδὴν ποιουμένων. This is made much of by Thompson, and with some reason, though Wilamowitz might have said that it would fit Gorgias as much as Isocrates and is merely a parody of rhetorical style in general.

<sup>3</sup> *Phaedrus* 179-82. Gifford (17-20) follows Thompson, but adds some relevant quotations from Isocrates himself. He might have included *Panath.* 18, where I. speaks of 'three or four common-or-garden Sophists - the sort that say they know everything' sitting in the Lyceum and slandering him. Some have seen a close relation between the *Euthyd.* and Isocr. *In Sophistas* (Gifford 32).

(4) THE GORGIAS<sup>1</sup>

*Date.* Literary criticism has provided the usual contradictions.<sup>2</sup> More promising seem the allusions to Pythagorean themes such as *kosmos* and the universal power of geometry (507e) and the fate of the soul after death (493a-c), and to 'a Sicilian or Italian' as the possible expounder of the latter and Mithaecus who wrote a book on Sicilian cookery (518b). These have been thought by many to point to a date soon after Plato's first visit to Magna Graecia in 387 and acquaintance with Archytas. (As Geffcken says, *Hermes* 1930, 27, P. is hardly likely to have heard of Mithaecus outside his own island.) Others date it earlier, and Morrison takes it to reflect only the already existing interest in Pythagoreanism which formed a motive for the journey (p. 17 above).<sup>3</sup> The later date seems more probable, and though there is no proof, what he says about tyrants might reflect his first personal experience of one in Sicily.<sup>4</sup> Other historical data adduced are the obvious connexion with some expressions of Isocrates, especially in his *In Soph.* and *Helen* (which do not however settle the question of priority), a possible relation to the *Accusation* of Polycrates (open to the same objection) and the evidence of the Seventh Letter for Plato's bitter disillusionment with contemporary politics, reflected in the *Gorgias*.<sup>5</sup> On the philosophical side Socrates the ignorant questioner has turned into a man of positive and strongly expressed convictions, and the dialogue contains the first of the great eschatological myths. The former might be explained by the intense personal antagonism between

<sup>1</sup> No one can write on this dialogue without acknowledging his debt to the exemplary commentary of E. R. Dodds. For editions and works on text to 1959, see this work, pp. 392f.

<sup>2</sup> 'A youthful work... it "drags"... diffuseness betrays the hand of the prentice' (Taylor, *PMW* 103); 'among the greatest, from the point of view of artistic perfection, of the dialogues of P.' (Lodge, *Gorg.* 25). I incline to agree with Taylor that the work is too long, but would attribute this rather to the emotional stress under which P. was writing.

<sup>3</sup> Morrison in *CQ* 1958. Dodds, who takes the other side, comments in *Gorg.* 26 n. 3. Note that Morrison (p. 213) takes the unusual view that *Phaedo* too antedates the Italian visit. Burkert (*Ant. u. Abendl.* 1968, 100 n. 14), who favours the later dating, adds ref. to those in Dodds. Others who have put it before 387 include Croiset (Budé ed. 101 f.) and Treves (*RE* XLII. Halbb. 1742). Witte (*Wiss. v. G. u. B.* 46) follows Dodds. Geffcken's article in *Hermes* 1930 is devoted to the dating of the dialogue, which he put after the visit to the West but before the *Meno*.

<sup>4</sup> 510b describes very well the relations between Dionysius and Dion as P. saw them (Geffcken, *Hermes* 1930, 28).

<sup>5</sup> For these points see Dodds 18-30.

## *The Gorgias*

Socrates and Callicles, but that leaves the question why Plato chose to confront him with such a hostile interlocutor. Stylometry associates the dialogue with the 'early' group, but only if that is allowed to include the *Protagoras* and *Meno*. It does not settle its relationship to the *Meno*, nor can that well be settled. Most probably it was written after, but not long after, 387.

*Dramatic date.* Conflicting historical allusions (listed in Dodds, 17 f.) show that Plato was either indifferent to the dating of this conversation or that, as Cornford thought, his vagueness was deliberate. In some dialogues he fixes the date with fair precision.<sup>1</sup>

*Characters and setting.* Gorgias, Callicles, and Socrates's fanatical disciple Chaerephon (who has a tiny part) have met us in vol. III. We need only add that the views attributed here to Gorgias correspond closely to those expressed in his own *Helen*. Polus is a historical figure, a Sicilian like his master, teacher of rhetoric and writer of a handbook on it referred to at 462 b.<sup>2</sup> The place of their talk is not mentioned, but since Gorgias has just finished an *epideixis*, and it is not in the house of Callicles where he is staying (447 b),<sup>3</sup> it must be somewhere public like a gymnasium. The audience, or many of them, have remained for the discussion (458 b-c). It is constructed in three episodes, each marked by a change of interlocutor and progressing from mutual respect (Gorgias), through rudeness met with irony and disdain (Polus), to outbursts of ill-temper (Callicles).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cornford, *Rep.* xx. Internally dated works are *Laches* (p. 125 above), *Charm.* (155), *Meno* (236), *Prot.* (214) in spite of one lapse for the sake of a quotation, and, of course, *Apol.*, *Crito*, *Euthyphro* and *Phaedo*.

<sup>2</sup> For Gorgias see vol. III, 269-74 and index, Callicles 101-7, and Chaerephon 365 n. 1, 405 f.; for Polus, Dodds 11, Nestle in *RE* XLII. Halbb. 1424 f.

<sup>3</sup> Curiously, some people have thought that it is. L. Paul in 1869 devoted an article to this minor point, to refute their error. ('Ist die Scene für den plat. Dialog *Gorg.* im Hause des K.?' )

<sup>4</sup> For the dramatic structure of the *G.*, which some have compared to a tragedy, see J. Duchemin, *REG* 1943, 265 f., with notes. Many have discovered a 'real' or thematic structure different from the dramatic, but as the same writer (who is one of them) says, 'chaque critique propose une structure différente', and we may leave them to the pastime.

# *Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus, Gorgias, Menexenus*

## *The dialogue*

### *(Direct dramatic form)*

*First round: Gorgias. Must the rhetorician understand the nature of right and wrong?* (447a–461b). S. and Chaerephon have just missed an *epideixis* by Gorgias, but S. would in any case prefer to have a sample of his other advertised skill, in answering questions, and learn something about his profession. Polus insists on answering for him, alleging that G. is tired. All right: let him say who G. is, in the sense that a maker of shoes is a cobbler etc. etc.<sup>1</sup> P. replies in flowery language that his is 'the finest of the arts', but this is not an answer and S. would much rather G. spoke for himself. G. replies that the art which he practises and teaches is rhetoric, and under further questioning, with analogies from other *technai*,<sup>2</sup> that its function is to produce conviction or persuasion. As the art of convincing men, it transcends all other arts. But (says S.) other arts also persuade. In what field does rhetoric exercise its power? In the field of right and wrong in law-courts and political bodies. After more apologetic explanation of his motives, S. makes G. admit that just as knowledge differs from belief (the one being always true, the other admitting of falsehood), so there are two kinds of persuasion, one (teaching) imparting knowledge, the other (rhetoric) belief without knowledge. He then repeats the point from the *Protagoras* that in matters calling for technical knowledge the Athenian Assembly will not consult orators but qualified experts (pp. 216 f. above). Yes (retorts G.), but the *prior decision* to build dockyards and walls for Athens was taken on the advice not of engineers but of Themistocles and Pericles. In fact if a doctor or any other specialist and an orator had to compete before the Assembly for the post of public physician or whatever it might be, the expert would come in a bad second. This places a great responsibility on the orator – but not on his teacher.

The orator, they conclude, though himself ignorant of a subject, is more persuasive than the expert when speaking before ignorant people.

<sup>1</sup> Actually S. gets Ch. to ask the questions, which is perhaps what stings Polus into making the replies. S.'s original request was, in full (447c), 'to learn from G. what is the function of his craft and what he professes and teaches'.

<sup>2</sup> This part follows even to verbal repetitions the talk with Hippocrates at the beginning of the *Prot.*, where it is the Sophists who make men clever speakers.

## *The Gorgias*

Is it the same with right and wrong? Or must G.'s pupils either start with a knowledge of right and wrong or acquire it from G.? G. (who, be it remembered, 'laughed at those who undertake to teach *aretē*', *Meno* 95c) replies lightly that he will teach them it 'if they don't happen to know'. On other subjects, then, the trained orator persuades without knowledge, but on right and wrong he is the expert, as a doctor on medicine. S. then carries the analogy with the arts a step further: knowledge of music makes a man musical, of building, an architect, of medicine a doctor and so on. Must not knowledge of justice by similar reasoning make a man just?<sup>1</sup> So there can be no question of an orator taught by G. misusing his knowledge for bad ends, which G. had spoken of as a possibility. Is G. being inconsistent?

*Second round: Polus. Is it better to do wrong or suffer it? (461b–481b).* P. declares that S. has taken an unfair advantage of G.'s natural reluctance to say that he does not understand and cannot teach the nature of right. He loves to trap people into seeming contradictions. S. is willing to retract anything he ought, provided they stick to the method of question and answer. Asked what art *he* thinks rhetoric to be, he replies that it is not an *art*, but the kind of empirical procedure which, as P. himself has written, precedes and gives birth to arts.<sup>2</sup> It produces gratification and pleasure, being in fact one of the pseudo-arts to which S. would give the generic name of pandering.<sup>3</sup> The genuine art to which it corresponds is a branch of the art of government, the political art. There are two arts concerned respectively with the wellbeing of soul and body. The former is the political art, which has two branches, legislation (which maintains wellbeing) and justice (which restores it).<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Greek uses adjectives from identical roots, saying 'knowledge of architecture makes a man architectural' etc. Behind this of course, though concealed from G., is S.'s conviction that all wrongdoing is the result of ignorance.

<sup>2</sup> 462b. At 448c Polus, evidently quoting himself, had said that the arts were learned 'empirically, from experience' or practice without theory. Aristotle agreed, holding that memories combine to form a single experience (ἐμπειρία) which, though it may resemble knowledge and art, is in fact a prior stage leading to them. He quotes Polus by name (*Metaph.* 980b29–981a5).

<sup>3</sup> κολακεία did not mean pandering in the restricted sense of procuring, but I adopt Hamilton's rendering here (Penguin trans.) to bring out its implication of moral baseness which 'flattery', the more usual translation, lacks. See Dodds on 463b1.

<sup>4</sup> According to R. W. Hall (*P. and I.* 117) the description of politics as concerned with the welfare of the soul 'results in the little-noticed moral paradox that morality is attained not by



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The latter has no general name but includes physical training (to maintain) and medicine (to restore). Each has a base counterfeit, aiming not at genuine good but at pleasure: as cosmetic (producing the appearance of health) is to training, so sophistic is to legislation, and as cookery is to medicine so rhetoric is to justice.<sup>1</sup> And in ignorant eyes a cook, who tickles the palate, would win every time against a doctor over the question of what are the best foods.

At any rate, says P., orators are not thought of as panders, but enjoy a tyrant's power, able to ruin or kill whom they choose. Perhaps, but ruin and killing are not ends but means. An orator is only powerful if these actions benefit him, so he must understand where his real benefit lies. Without this understanding, to do what you please (what *seems* good to you at the moment) may be the reverse of effecting your real will. Indeed if the killing etc. be unjust, the doer is more to be pitied than his victim, since it is better for one to suffer than to do wrong. Happiness goes with moral goodness. To P. this is nonsense. Are we to call the tyrant Archelaus of Macedon unhappy, because he enjoys power which he gained by unscrupulous and bloody means? Everyone but S. would say no, but he demands to be persuaded by argument, not numbers. He maintains moreover that while Archelaus is in unhappy case anyway, it will be worse if his crimes go unpunished. What? A man caught aiming at a tyranny, tortured and seeing his family tortured and then put to death, is *happier* than if he had been successful and spent the rest of his life doing just what he pleased? Well, neither is happy, but he will be less miserable. S. undertakes to show that P. and everyone else really agree with him, and does it through the relationship of the two words *kalon* ('fine', with its opposite *aischron*, ugly, or morally base or disgraceful) and *agathon* ('good', opposed to *kakon*, 'bad').<sup>2</sup> P. agrees at once that to do wrong is *baser* than to suffer it, but denies that it is *worse*. He agrees emphatically, however, when S. defines 'fine' in terms of goodness (equated with utility) and pleasure,

the individual and his own efforts, but by the statesman'. One might as well say that, in S.'s opinion, because we have trainers and doctors individual effort has no part in the maintenance of health.

<sup>1</sup> For the relation between rhetoric and sophistic as described here, see vol. III, 176f.

<sup>2</sup> On these two terms see pp. 177f. above. The description of καλόν here is a condensation of the topic more fully dealt with in *H. Maj.* For its extension (beautiful sights, sounds, laws and practices, 474e) cf. *H. Maj.* 298a-b.

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and 'ugly' or 'base' by their opposites. But then if doing wrong is uglier or baser than suffering it, it must be either more painful or worse (more harmful). It is not (they both agree) more painful, therefore it is more harmful.

On the second point, that it is worse for a criminal to escape punishment than to endure it, if he deserves it his punishment will be just, justice (as P. agrees) is a *fine* thing, and since what is fine must be either pleasurable or good, what he suffers must be of benefit to him. The benefit is to his soul. Corruption in the soul means such things as wickedness, ignorance, cowardice, and these are *baser* than harm to body or fortune. Then on the same argument, since to be wicked is not more painful than to be ill or poor, it must be *worse* for a man. Bodily ailments are cured by medicine or surgery, which though not pleasant are endured for the good they do, and the execution of justice performs the same function for the soul. The happiest man is the healthy, who does not need treatment, next happiest the man who needs and gets it, and unhappiest the man whose diseases go untreated. Since wickedness is not only base but the worst of all evils, the man who is punished for his sins is better off than an Archelaus. So the best use of oratory would be to ensure that anyone whom we care for, if he has done wrong, is brought to book, and the worst one could wish for an enemy is that he enjoy the ill-gotten fruits of wickedness.

*Third round: Callicles. How should one live? (481b–527c).*<sup>1</sup> C. breaks in to protest that S.'s teaching would turn human life upside-down. Polus has only been defeated, like G., through a false shame. He ought never to have admitted that to do wrong is baser than to suffer it: that is the answer of convention, not nature, a low and vulgar answer. To be wronged and unable to defend oneself is unmanly and slavish. The convention that getting the better of others is immoral is an invention of the weak multitude. They preach equality as the best they can hope for, being inferior, but natural right is for the better and stronger to rule their inferiors. S. is corrupted by his addiction to philosophy, which is

<sup>1</sup> πῶς βιωτέον; 492d; also 487e and 500c. But these dramatic divisions are artificial. In his exchanges with Polus, S. had already described their subject as 'knowledge or ignorance of who is happy and who is not' (472c).

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all right as a pastime for the young, but ruinous to grown men, who become unpractical dreamers, useless to themselves or others. Such men deserve to be whipped, and S. would be well advised to give up this airy nonsense.

S. is profuse in his thanks: this complete frankness is just what he needs, for if he errs it is through ignorance. There could be no better subject for instruction than this of what sort of man one should be, what course one should pursue and for how long. If right consists in the stronger seizing the goods of the weaker and ruling them, because 'stronger' and 'better' are the same (and C. agrees that is his meaning), surely a multitude is naturally stronger than one man, therefore if the people believe in equality, that must be naturally right. Just like S., to catch a man out over a verbal slip. Of course C. did not mean that a rabble of brawny slaves and nobodies may lay down the law. At S.'s suggestion, he agrees that by stronger and better he meant the more intelligent or knowledgeable. Nature ordains that such should rule over and 'get more than' the worthless mob. Then should a doctor, knowledgeable about diet, get more food, a shoemaker more and bigger shoes and so on? This is S.'s infuriating way of asking what kind of knowledge the 'better' must have, and after expressing his contempt for such irrelevances, C. describes the better as those who know how a city should be controlled, and have the courage and firmness to attain their ends. *Self-control* is for fools. The naturally right way of living is to let one's desires grow, never restrain them but seize the means of satisfying them, just what the incapable and cowardly many call wicked. Free indulgence in luxury and wantonness is the true virtue and happiness.

S. compares this life to the fabled punishment in Hades of carrying water in leaky jars, and even more elegantly to a bird which was supposed to eat and excrete simultaneously. C. replies unmoved that this constant depletion and replenishment constitute the pleasant and the good life, pleasure and goodness being identical. When S. presses the point to the extent of mentioning male prostitution (which does *not* come within the moral code of a Callicles), he still maintains for the sake of consistency that there are no bad pleasures, and S. leaves similes and morality for a dialectical argument. C. admits that opposites (e.g.

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health and sickness) cannot exist in a man at the same times and in the same part of him, and further that being fortunate and being unfortunate<sup>1</sup> are opposites. Now hunger and thirst are painful, but C. maintains that eating when hungry or drinking when thirsty are pleasant, and only pleasant so long as the hunger or thirst is felt. Hence pain and pleasure can occur together, therefore they cannot be opposites and must be different from acting and faring ill or well, and pleasure is not the same as good.

C. cannot stand S.'s 'niggling little sophisms',<sup>2</sup> but is persuaded to continue by a rebuke from G., and S. passes to an argument dependent on his usual expression of predication in terms of nouns, and the 'presence' of something in a subject. Good men are good by the presence of what is good,<sup>3</sup> and vice versa. Brave and sensible men (says C.) are good, cowards and fools are not. But cowards and fools feel much the same amount of pleasure and pain as the brave and wise. When men feel pleasure, pleasures are present to them, i.e. (given C.'s identification of pleasure and good) what is good is present to them, therefore fools and cowards are good.

The exasperated C. now makes a shameless *volte face*. S. should have known he was not serious: of course he distinguishes good and bad pleasures like everybody else. Good pleasures, he agrees, are those whose results are beneficial, and since all action should be a means to the good, those alone should be chosen. But to know which pleasures are good and which bad calls for expert knowledge. At this point S. pleads earnestly with C. not to take the subject lightly: it involves nothing less than a choice between two opposed ways of living: the life of practical affairs, politics and public speaking, and that of philosophy. He reminds C. of his earlier distinction between a true art and an empirical knack. The latter proceeds in an unmethodical, hit-and-miss way, aiming

<sup>1</sup> Again the ambiguous εὖ πράττειν, 'to act well' and 'to prosper'.

<sup>2</sup> Adkins (*M. and R.* 280 n. 10) says the argument is fallacious. 'P. is cheating: it is "drinking when thirsty" that C. should have admitted to be pleasant – thereby destroying the argument – not drinking *per se*.' I do not understand this. 'Eating when hungry' and 'drinking when thirsty' are just what C. does maintain to be pleasant (494 b–c, 496 c–d). Drinking *per se*, as Adkins says, cannot be called either pleasant or painful. C. would agree, which is why he says the pleasure lies in drinking when thirsty, i.e. (as S. points out) when drinking is a pleasure but coincides with the pain of thirst.

<sup>3</sup> On this see pp. 307 f. below.

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simply at pleasure without even understanding it or making any distinction between good and bad pleasures. After some agreed examples of this, S. asks to which class belong the speeches of orators to democratic assemblies. Is the sole object to please, with a view to their own success (thus 'pandering'), or do they genuinely aim at improving the citizens? C. cannot point to any of the better sort now living, but mentions Themistocles, Cimon, Miltiades and Pericles in the recent past. S. will only admit these on C.'s original definition of virtue as satisfaction of every desire, not on the new understanding that some pleasures are harmful and the choice calls for knowledge, being an art (*technē*) like any other. Like other craftsmen, the good orator will aim at turning out a serviceable article. His material is the souls of men, which like the timbers of a ship or the bricks of a house, are made good and useful by being given a definite *form*, through an orderly arrangement of parts. Such order in the body is called health, in the soul the element of law, synonymous with justice and self-control.<sup>1</sup> To implant these, then, not to satisfy desires, is the aim of the orator who understands his craft. As a diseased body must be treated with a strict regimen, so a corrupt soul needs discipline.

This conclusion is so repugnant to C. that not even G. can persuade him to continue the argument, and S. has to carry on by himself. After recapitulating, he insists that the self-controlled will be not only altogether good (the unity of the virtues is briefly restated) but happy,<sup>2</sup> and the undisciplined and licentious miserable. They are mere brigands, incapable of social life. Philosophers say that this principle of order (*kosmos*), association, discipline and mathematical proportion sustains not only humanity but the whole cosmos (whence its name). C.'s approval of unlimited greed springs from neglect of geometry, and S. was right in saying earlier that to do wrong was not only baser but more harmful to the doer. It is better for a man to suffer it, even to death, and if oratory is to be an art (*technē*) it demands a knowledge of right and wrong.

Now to avoid being injured one needs power, by being either an

<sup>1</sup> *Sophrosynē*, for which see p. 156 above.

<sup>2</sup> Once more by tedious use of the ambiguous phrase εὖ πράττειν. They will 'do well', and he who does well is happy. The ambiguity persists in Aristotle, *Pol.* 1323a14-19, b29-32.

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absolute ruler oneself or a friend of the established government. (C., who has rejoined the conversation, for once agrees with enthusiasm.) To be friend to a dictator one must cultivate his ways, for he will fear his superior and despise his inferior. But this assimilation will expose one to the greater evil, that of injuring others with impunity and so corrupting the soul. C. thinks this utterly perverse, simply repeating after Polus that such a man will, if he wishes, kill or rob any of the other sort, and has to be reminded that to save one's life and goods is nothing great. Swimming is not among the noblest arts, though it often saves life. Sea-captains and engineers<sup>1</sup> preserve life and goods, yet they are content with a modest social status, and C. would never allow his son to marry the engineer's daughter. If virtue consists in being able to save one's own and others' skins, he ought to hold such men in the highest esteem.

In pursuit of his political ambitions, C. too must adapt himself to the sovereign power. This in democratic Athens is the populace, which likes to hear only what harmonizes with its own character, and he must bear in mind the distinction already arrived at between pandering to desires and aiming at genuine improvement. Did those whom he mentioned as good statesmen really leave the citizens better than they found them? Some say Pericles debauched them by introducing pay for public services. At any rate, though respecting him at first, in the end they convicted him of embezzlement and almost condemned him to death. They seem to have become more vicious under his influence. Cimon and Themistocles they ostracized, and for Miltiades they actually voted the death penalty. If these had been good men, either in C.'s sense or in S.'s, they would never have come to this. Doubtless they were better than their successors at ministering to the desires of the populace, a thing which any merchant or manufacturer could do. Men say they made Athens great, when she is in fact swollen and ulcerous because they did not possess the genuine art of *changing* sick desires for healthy. They have been cooks, not doctors. Yet when the inevitable disaster comes, men will not blame their past rulers but those who are at hand, perhaps Alcibiades and Callicles himself. Finally, when C. recommends S. to enter politics, which does he advise him to be, doctor or cook?

<sup>1</sup> Military engineers who construct defence works.

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‘Cook’, says C., ‘or else . . .’ S. is tired of being told that he will be killed or otherwise punished. Very likely he will, being practically the only man in Athens who practises the true political art. All will still be well if he has the best defence in his own eyes, a clear conscience. What is fearful is not death itself, but to enter the next world with a guilt-laden soul.

This is confirmed by a story ‘which you will think myth, but I take for truth’. Men were once judged in the body, on the day of their death, and by living judges, to decide who should go to the Isles of the Blest and who to punishment in Tartarus. This led to miscarriages of justice, for the judges, their own souls hampered by reliance on the bodily senses, were distracted by extraneous factors like high birth or wealth and the pleas of witnesses. Zeus therefore decreed that the souls should be judged ‘naked’, after death, and by judges themselves freed from the body, who see nothing but the state of the soul itself. The worst marred are often those of statesmen and rulers, for power has given them exceptional opportunities for harming their souls by committing the greatest sins. They need not, and the exceptions are especially praiseworthy. Aristides was one, but they are rare. In any case, what matters is not worldly success but to follow truth and goodness and present as healthy a soul as possible to the judges of the next world. C. may think this an old wives’ tale, but neither he nor Gorgias nor Polus has been able to point to a better way of life. Only in the firm resolve to follow this one is it safe to enter politics.

*Comment*

The *Gorgias* is an extraordinary production, not for its philosophy (which is a compendium of Socratic doctrines already familiar), but for its passionate and outspoken criticism of Athenian politics and politicians from the Persian Wars to the disaster of 404 and the execution of Socrates five years later. In the *Meno* statesmen (two of whom, Themistocles and Pericles, are mentioned here also) are not indeed glorified: they are described as good men who owed their success to divine favour or chance rather than their own wisdom, and on that account were unable to impart the secret of it to others. But only here are they condemned outright as responsible for Athens’s ultimate

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downfall, through leaving her sick and weakened by surfeit instead of using their power to institute a healthy regimen. Against Pericles Plato is especially violent, and perhaps he was right. One modern scholar at least (Peter Green, *S. of P.* 16) says of Pericles that 'his entire public career was devoted to furthering Athens' greatness, yet every step he took made his city's ultimate downfall more inevitable'. This is precisely Plato's verdict. Nor does he write with philosophic calm, but under the influence of an over-mastering indignation that shows itself in almost every line, culminating perhaps in that pronouncement which so disgusted Grote, where the rottenness of Athens is attributed to her being glutted with 'harbours, dockyards, walls, tribute *and suchlike rubbish*' (519a). Socrates, in the eyes of the Victorian, not only condemns exorbitant and maleficent desires but depreciates and degrades all the actualities of life, among them 'effective maintenance of public force such as ships, docks, walls, arms etc.' (*Pl.* II, 130 f.) Nowadays we tend rather to reflect that under Pericles's guidance Athens used these not primarily for defence but for self-aggrandisement, for turning her Greek allies into subjects, while much of the tribute intended for the joint defence of the Greeks against the Persians was used to adorn and glorify Athens herself.<sup>1</sup>

Many have seen the main purpose of the *Gorgias* as another defence of Socrates. There are indeed many echoes of the *Apology*, and the speeches of Socrates towards the end read like another *Apology* themselves. But it is a transformed Socrates. The ironic self-depreciating inquirer (not of course completely absent; cf. 461 c-d, 486 d-488 b) is overshadowed by the man who *knows*. The departure from the mood of the previous Socratic dialogues begins early. He starts by asking characteristically what rhetoric *is*; but instead of declaring that he does not know, and inviting and rejecting definitions one by one until all have proved inadequate (or as in the *Protagoras* and *Meno* regretting in his final words that they have all the time been trying to decide on an attribute of the subject before they know what it is) he here declares (463 c) 'I shall not tell him whether I think rhetoric fine or base until I have answered the question what it is', and straightway answers it. This Socrates is not so much a man as a symbol of the philosophic life,

<sup>1</sup> But for Pericles see also the fuller note of Hamilton in Penguin trans., p. 131.



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portrayed here as nowhere else in Plato – not even in the *Republic* – in bitter and exaggerated contrast with the life of public affairs. Wilamowitz was right (*Pl.* 1, 236): we should not read the *Gorgias* in cold blood ('mit kaltem Herzen') as a philosophical treatise on rhetoric or the relation between good and pleasant. It reflects a personal crisis, Plato in middle life asking himself the question: how must I live? The historical circumstances that could give rise to such a crisis have been outlined on pp. 16 f. Into Callicles Plato has put all that he disliked in Athenian political life, the naked and murderous power-lust of Critias and his associates (which he now sees as a streak running through the conduct of Athens from the time when she rose to be the leading state of Greece) and the reasons which led to the execution of Socrates by the restored democracy. He sees no redeeming feature. In contrast to the *Protagoras*, where Plato is dealing with a point of view which, though not his own, he respected, what starts as an urbane and civilized discussion degenerates into an exchange of insults and threats.<sup>1</sup>

*Familiar Socratic elements* include the ubiquitous analogy from the crafts, the distinction between knowledge and belief (454e, cf. *Meno*, pp. 261–4 above), the principles underlying Athenian democracy (455b–c, cf. *Prot.* 319b–d), the use of *parusia* (497e, cf. *Lysis* and *Euthyd.*, pp. 151, 278), the identification of good with useful or beneficial (499d, *Meno* and *Prot.* p. 239 n. 1), the unity of the virtues (507b–c, argued in *Prot.* and strongly hinted at in *Laches*, pp. 132–3), wrongdoing bad for the doer as well as disgraceful (469b etc., *Apol.* 29b, 30b, *Crito* 49b), the importance of the soul and its care (*Apol.* 29e–30d, p. 89, *Crito* 47d ff., *Laches* 185e) and the analogy between health of body and of soul (464a ff., 477a ff., 504b ff., *Rep.* 444c, *Crito* 47b–48a, *Charm.* 156b–157a).<sup>2</sup> On most of these topics the *Gorgias* throws no new light. Others are gone into more deeply in later

<sup>1</sup> The contrast is further described in vol. III, 105–7. Some of the views attributed to Protagoras in *Prot.* appear elsewhere in the mouth of Socrates. Instances occur in *Gorg.* at 525b (the motive for punishment should not be retribution or vengeance but reform or example, *Prot.* 324a–c) and 507e (incapacity of the wicked for social life, a theme of *Prot.*'s main speech; see 322d, 324e–325b etc.). *Prot.*'s attitude to law is that of S. in *Crito* (p. 98 above).

<sup>2</sup> Many of these, being Socratic, are dealt with in vol. III. Reminiscences of *Apol.* and allusions to S.'s trial and death are too numerous and obvious to need pointing out.

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works, rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*, knowledge and belief in the *Republic*, pleasure in the *Philebus*. Pleasure is also one of those already met with, in the *Protagoras*, and the relation between the two accounts is thought by some to pose a problem (pp. 302–5 below).

*The Socratic method and its aims.* We have often seen Socrates in action, but only in this dialogue does Plato describe his aims in general terms. Without necessarily accepting his own estimation, we ought to know what it is, and a few quotations will show us.<sup>1</sup> Unlike Callicles, Gorgias is a reasonable man who deserves this kind of consideration, and to him the explanations are addressed.

453 a. If ever any man made it his object in conversation to know exactly what the conversation is about, I am quite sure – and you may be sure too – that I am such a man. . . I won't say that I haven't a suspicion of your meaning on both points, but that suspicion won't prevent me from asking you what you believe to be the nature of the conviction produced by oratory and the subject of that conviction. You may wonder why, if I have this suspicion, I ask you instead of answering the question myself. I am moved to do so not by any consideration personal to you but by consideration for the argument, which I wish to proceed in such a way as to place before us in the clearest possible light what we are talking about.

454 b. That is just what I suspected you meant. But don't be surprised if later on I repeat the procedure and ask additional questions when the answer seems to be already clear. My motive, as I say, is not in the least personal; it is simply to help the discussion to progress towards its end in a logical sequence and to prevent us from getting into the habit of anticipating one another's statements because we have a vague suspicion what they are likely to be, instead of allowing you to develop your own argument in your own way from the agreed premises. (To which Gorgias replies: 'A very proper procedure, Socrates.')

457 e. I am afraid that if I probe the matter further you may suppose that my purpose is not so much to elucidate the subject as to win a verbal victory over you. If you are the same sort of person as I myself, I will willingly go on questioning you; otherwise I will stop. If you ask what I mean, I am one of those people who are glad to have their own mistakes pointed out and glad to point out the mistakes of others, but who would just as soon have the first experience as the second; in fact I consider the

<sup>1</sup> I quote the Penguin translation by Hamilton.

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first a greater gain, inasmuch as it is better to be relieved of very bad trouble oneself than to relieve another, and in my opinion no worse trouble can befall a man than to have a false belief about the subjects which we are now discussing.<sup>1</sup>

One can well understand the irritation caused by this habit of 'asking questions when the answer seems already clear', when unaccompanied by the polite explanation vouchsafed to Gorgias.

*Rhetoric and morals.* Critics have used up a lot of ink on the question whether the subject of the *Gorgias* is rhetoric or morals. Thus J. Duchemin saw two themes and found it necessary to ask which is the principal one, and Taylor distinguished the 'ostensible' subject (rhetoric) from the real. The dichotomy dates from antiquity. Olympiodorus wrote: 'some say its aim is to discuss rhetoric, others that it is a conversation about justice and injustice'. He rejects both views as partial, and his own conclusion could hardly be bettered: 'Its aim is to discuss the moral principles leading to the happiness of a political society.' The fact is, of course, that in Plato's Greece rhetoric itself was a tremendous moral and political force, and to treat it in isolation would never occur to a Greek and would involve a quite illegitimate separation of form from content.<sup>2</sup> The art which according to its own most famous exponent gives men 'not only freedom for themselves but the power to rule others in their own city' (452d) can hardly be discussed in abstraction from either ethics or politics. The subject of the dialogue is best described by its author: 'The subject of our discussion is this. . . what life should one choose, the one to which you invite me, doing what you call a man's work, speaking in the Assembly, exercising oneself in rhetoric and practising politics in the way that you present-day politicians do, or the life of philosophy; and how does the one differ from the other?' (500c). Nothing could express better the personal dilemma of Plato in the years after 399. He could not approve of the Athenian type of democracy. The lover of Demos, shifting to every

<sup>1</sup> Cf. 470c, 505e-506a, 506b-c.

<sup>2</sup> A mistake not made by S. and Gorgias. See 449e. If the moral and political power of rhetoric in Athens has not emerged from vol. III of this *History*, it has indeed been written in vain. Ref. for the above paragraph are: Duchemin in *REG* 1943, 273; Taylor, *PMW* 106; Olymp. in *Gorg.*, Prooem. p. 2 Norvin (quoted by Friedlander, *Pl.* II, 353 n. 1).

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wind of public opinion, is contrasted with the lover of *sophia*. But 'tyranny' (dictatorship or despotism) was even more repugnant. The populace, like the tyrant, seeks to satisfy its own selfish lusts, and the man who would gain power in a democracy must pander to those lusts. The good statesman, on the other hand, like any good craftsman, would pride himself on turning his material (in this case the citizens) into a good product, and to this end would work on a principle of 'geometrical proportion', not indiscriminate equality but treating each according to his deserts. Moreover if he really understands the art of statesmanship he will be able to train others in the same ideals. If this is not expressly stated in the *Gorgias*, we know it from the end of the *Meno*, where the man who could do this appears as a Tiresias in Hades, the only one with sense among the 'leaping shadows' of actual politicians. Moreover Gorgias is emphatic that the rhetorician both practises and hands on his art (449b), and rhetoric is in Plato's eyes a counterfeit of true, or philosophic, statesmanship, just as in the *Phaedrus* philosophy is the only true rhetoric. But Plato has known only one Tiresias, 'the only man to practise the true political art' – the man who took no active part in politics and in modern Athens had been put to death as a corrupter of the young. He deplored the breach between the man of action (whom the world called *sophos*) and the philosopher, and described in detail in the *Republic* the ideal combination of philosopher and ruler. But in the emotional crisis which produced the *Gorgias*, he seems to have had no hope that it could ever be realized.

*Mathematics, proportion and order.* Mathematical and semi-mathematical illustrations, though less technical and complex than in the *Meno*, do occur and have suggested a Pythagorean element. At 465 b Socrates says that for the sake of brevity he will speak 'as the geometers do',<sup>1</sup> and produces a double statement of proportions in the form  $a:b::c:d$  and  $e:f::g:h$ . More striking is the argument at 503e ff. The aim of craftsmen (artists, builders, shipwrights) is 'to introduce order (*taxis*) into their material, making one part fit and harmonize with another

<sup>1</sup> 'The Greek mathematicians treated proportion as a part of geometry, not of arithmetic' (Dodds *ad loc.*). One is reminded of the use of proportion in the Divided Line of *Rep.* 6. Schuhl has a short article on this passage in *REG* 1939.

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until the whole emerges as a product of order and design (*kosmos*). Similarly bodily health results from a due ordering of parts. This applies universally. The cosmos itself is so called after the regularity and order which it displays. It is true of the human soul, and order in the soul is achieved through self-control and obedience to law. Callicles's idealization of unbridled self-seeking is due to his neglect of geometry and ignorance of the power wielded by 'geometrical equality' among both gods and men. This emphasis on *kosmos*, bound up with the cosmic significance of mathematical laws, was undoubtedly Pythagorean,<sup>1</sup> but by the fifth century the wide application of *kosmos* was generally known and used. In the *Protagoras* (322c) it is Protagoras who describes justice and moral sense as the requisites for *kosmos* in cities and a bond of friendship and union. More than that, *kosmos* figures prominently at the beginning of Gorgias's own *Helen* (DK II, p. 288), where it is said to be represented by manly virtue in a city, beauty in a body, wisdom in a soul and truth in speech, thus coming very close to Plato's description here of *kosmos* in body and soul. *Kosmos* could be used of a constitution or legal system like that which Lycurgus gave to Sparta. This is certainly consonant with the meaning 'ordering of parts', but less so is its use as a title of Cretan magistrates corresponding to the Spartan ephors.<sup>2</sup> There is also its common use from Homer onwards to mean adornment.

These considerations may suggest a certain caution in approaching a view like that of Thompson in his edition (p. viii), that we have here a new departure which, if compared with the purely Socratic dialogues, marks 'an epoch in Plato's mental growth'. Nevertheless when *kosmos* here is related to crafts which produce their results 'by making one part fit and harmonize with another', and to *taxis*, whose meaning is more closely restricted to that of orderly arrangement, it does seem that we have here an earlier adumbration of the doctrine developed at length in the *Republic* that the soul is complex and righteousness consists in a harmonious order and working together of its parts.<sup>3</sup> Plato is

<sup>1</sup> See the ch. on the Pythagoreans in vol. I, and the index s.v. *kosmos*.

<sup>2</sup> For the Lycurgan constitution see Hdt. 1.65.4; Cretan magistrates, Arist. *Pol.* 1272a5 and inscriptions cited by LSJ s.v.

<sup>3</sup> No doubt Pythagorean influence was at work here too. T. M. Robinson (*P.'s Psych.* 15) has noted that the expression τῆς ψυχῆς τοῦτο ἐν ᾧ ἐπιθυμῶμαι εἶσι occurs in the context of the σῶμα-σῆμα doctrine.

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feeling his way beyond the simple 'virtue is knowledge' of the Socratic dialogues, to which no one but Socrates himself could aspire, towards a deeper psychology with something approaching a recognition of the role of the will.

The commendation of 'geometrical equality' is a clue to Plato's political ideas. It relates things by equality of *proportion*, whereas 'arithmetical equality' relates them by equality of *amount*. (See also vol. III, 151.) In the *Laws* he wrote:

There are two sorts of equality... One is within the reach of every city and legislator in their distribution of privileges, namely equality of measure, weight and number, granting equal distribution by lot. But the truest and best equality is not so obvious... It distributes more to the greater and less to the lesser, apportioning its gifts to the nature of each, greater privileges to men of more merit, and to their opposites in merit and education whatever is their due... For us the essence of statesmanship is always justice, and if that is our present aim we must take the second kind of equality as the model in founding our city.<sup>1</sup>

To make some use of the lot, he concedes, is unavoidable for the sake of public relations, but it must be as little as possible.

Obviously Plato could not have approved of democracy as understood at Athens, and his chief complaint against her men of power is that they pandered to the whims of the *demos* instead of disciplining and educating it. But he loathed tyranny far more, indeed his worst fear concerning extreme democracy and the degeneration of freedom into licence, expressed in *Rep.* 8, is that it inevitably leads to dictatorship. His advocacy of geometrical equality is addressed not to a democrat, but to Callicles who despised the *demos* and would simply use it to further his own ambitions. The incurable sinners in Hades, we learn (525d), have mostly been tyrants, kings and potentates. But for an adequate exposition of Plato's political ideals we must await the *Republic*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* 757b ff. At *Rep.* 558c democracy is described as 'distributing equality to equals and unequals alike'. Aristotle describes the distinction as that between arithmetical equality and equality according to worth (*Pol.* 1302a6). Cf. Plut. *Qu. conv.* 719a-b: 'Lycurgus banished arithmetical proportion because of its association with democracy and mob-rule, and introduced the geometrical, suited to a moderate oligarchy or a constitutional monarchy. The one distributes an equal amount, by number, the other an amount corresponding to worth, by proportion' etc.

<sup>2</sup> Vlastos has an interesting note on the *Gorg.* passage in 'Iσον. πολ. 27 n. 7.

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*Pleasure and good: Plato's attitude to hedonism.* It is sometimes thought that the attack on hedonism (the doctrine that pleasure and good are identical) in the *Gorgias* is a complete contradiction of its apparent defence in the *Protagoras*. It is to save Plato from this 'sudden *volte face*' that Sullivan supports the view that the argument in the latter is *ad hominem* and Socrates does not himself believe the premise which he uses to prove his main thesis that virtue is knowledge; and Dodds (p. 21) writes of a Socrates 'who can prove that "virtue is knowledge" only on a hedonist assumption which is plainly incompatible with the ethical standpoint of the *Gorgias* and the *Republic*'. This is worth a further look.

First, what is Socrates's position in the *Gorgias*? In the discussion with Polus he argues that wrongful acts are not only wicked, base or dishonourable but also worse for the doer than for his victim. ('Bad' (*kakon*) means as usual 'working to one's disadvantage or harm' and 'good' means 'beneficial' (468c) as in the *Meno* and elsewhere.) The pseudo-arts produce pleasure, whereas what matters is the good of the *psyche*. We have met both these doctrines in the *Apology* (pp. 89f., 91) and *Crito* (98), and presumably they were not abandoned when Plato wrote the *Protagoras*. Painful and dangerous experiences, the *Gorgias* continues (467c–d, 478c), such as surgery or dangerous trading voyages for profit, are not performed for their own sake but for further ends (health, wealth) – in short, for the good, equated with beneficial (468c). Contrary to the general opinion, the wrongdoer, especially if he goes unpunished, is, because of the harm to his *psyche* (477a etc.), miserable and pitiable (469b), not happy and blessed (471d, 472d); that is the lot of the morally good man (507b–d, 508b). The man who flees from punishment is like one who needs the surgeon's knife but is afraid to submit to it: he sees the pain of it and is blind to the benefit it will bring, not realizing how much more miserable than bodily disease is the fate of being tied to a sick, rotten and unrighteous soul (479b).

To Callicles he shows what he is against, namely the idea that to live rightly according to nature is to let one's desires grow as big as possible, never repress them, but acquire the means to gratify them as and when they occur, since the enjoyment of luxury and licentiousness

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constitutes true virtue and happiness (491 e–492 a, 492 c). When Callicles is forced to abandon his insistence on the identity of pleasure and good, and admit the existence of bad pleasures and good pains (499 b), Socrates keeps the lead. He does indeed deny that good is identical with pleasant and bad with painful (497 d, 500 d), but immediately connects this with his own equation of good with beneficial: ‘good pleasures and pains are those which benefit us, bad are those which do us harm’. Pleasant activities, like all activities, should be a means to good, and to recognize these needs a genuine art (*technē*), not the kind of empirical knack that panders to pleasure alone (499 d–500 a, 501 b).

The thesis argued in the *Protagoras*<sup>1</sup> is that pleasure in itself, leaving aside its consequences, is good (351 e), and conversely good is pleasure (355 a), so they are identical. In spite of this, it is possible to make a wrong choice of pleasures (357 d). Although all pleasure is good, the phenomenon which the multitude call ‘doing evil by yielding to pleasure’, or ‘losing one’s self-control’, does exist, but their explanation of it is wrong. They have in mind that a man may be led to indulge his desire of ordinary pleasures – eating, drinking, sex – to an extent which will lead to disease, poverty or other ‘pains’. All pleasure being good, our aim must be to secure the maximum amount of it over the whole span of our lives, and there are some pleasures which, though good while they last, are outweighed by the pains (evils) that result from them. To achieve the aim then, we must learn to measure or weigh the total amount of pleasure and pain, future as well as present, which our action will produce, and we end up satisfactorily with the Socratic teaching that right living depends not on strength or weakness of will, but solely on knowledge.

It should be obvious that the difference between this and the ethic of the *Gorgias* is one of terminology, not substance. I have already stated (pp. 232 ff. above) my view that in the social gathering at the house of Callias we are not given the full teaching of the Platonic Socrates, but shown (by both Protagoras and Socrates) the highest ethic to which a believer in ‘man the measure’ could aspire. Socrates says nothing

<sup>1</sup> We need not for the moment ask whose the thesis is. Protagoras at first demurs, and it is argued only as the logical conclusion to be drawn from popular opinion, but Socrates nowhere suggests an alternative, and argues it convincingly enough for all the Sophists present to agree in the end that it is their own view too (358 a).



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which he would wish to unsay, but simply leaves some things unsaid. For instance, knowledge is still the prerequisite of the good life, but there is no hint that it is better to suffer than to commit a wrong, no mention of 'care of the *psyche*' as the primary concern or of carrying the balance of pleasure and pain into the next life, above all (as Socrates says at the end) no search for the *essence* of goodness, which would at once have involved them in denying the relative, 'man the measure' ethic and epistemology by admitting that goodness is a genuine reality which does not change according to our own notions of it at this time or that, but has to be *discovered*.

The *Gorgias* speaks of good and bad pleasures, meaning by the terms (as we have seen) pleasures which have useful or beneficial *results* and pleasures which do not; the *Protagoras* of pleasures which do and those which do not lead to future pains. Only the latter are choiceworthy. They include, in Ritter's words (*Essence* 59), 'everything which in any way furthered human existence', and definitely exclude the behaviour eulogized by Callicles (who is no Protagoras) and condemned by Socrates. The eudaemonism of the *Gorgias*, where Socrates time and again recommends goodness as the only road to true happiness, matches the choiceworthy pleasures of the *Protagoras*, which will increase the total sum of pleasure during a man's whole existence. ('Pleasurable' and 'happy' are identified by Socrates at *Gorg.* 494d.) Moreover both dialogues agree that to identify these choiceworthy pleasures (called 'good' in the *Gorgias*) one must acquire a *technē*, that is, knowledge (*Prot.* 357b, *Gorg.* 500a). But in the *Protagoras* Plato aims only at bringing out the best in the Protagorean ethic, leaving the reader to see (as he easily can) how nearly it approaches the Socratic, whereas in the *Gorgias*, in angry mood, he is contrasting as sharply as he can the Socratic ideal with the greedy, lawless and self-seeking ambitions so prevalent in Athens, which had finally made him turn his back in disgust on the contemporary political scene. For that reason it is only there that we learn that in planning to achieve the greatest happiness we have to take into account a future life where the values of this one will be reversed,<sup>1</sup> and that therefore the welfare of the immortal

<sup>1</sup> A Christian pupil once expressed to me his uneasiness at the fact that in both Plato and the Gospels morality seems to be recommended on grounds of self-interest, to secure a better

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part of us must be our chief concern, and we would be wise to suffer rather than commit wrong and welcome punishment as the surgery of the soul. All this Plato believed, but neither the deliberate incompleteness of the *Protagoras* nor the angry confrontation of the *Gorgias* gives us his mature and considered philosophy of pleasure. For that we must wait till the *Philebus*.

*The mythical element.* The *Gorgias* is noteworthy for containing the first of Plato's epilogues describing the fate of souls after death, a preliminary to the more elaborate eschatological schemes of the *Phaedo* and *Republic* (though judgement in Hades by Minos, Rhadamanthys and Aeacus, the 'true judges', has been mentioned in the *Apology*, 41 a). A growing interest in the old stories as imaginative representations of religious or philosophical truths is also shown earlier in the dialogue, when Socrates mentions the conception of the body (*soma*) as a tomb (*sema*) and of the lustful soul as a leaky jar. The former he has learned from 'one of the wise' and the latter he thinks the invention of 'a clever mythologist, perhaps an Italian or Sicilian', which suggests a Pythagorean or Orphic source.<sup>1</sup> The carrying of water in a broken pitcher was depicted by Polygnotus as a punishment for the uninitiated.<sup>2</sup>

The sources of the final myth have been carefully and thoroughly explored by Dodds in his 'dissection' of it (*Gorg.* pp. 372-6). I would only plead, as against his last paragraph, that the Orphic writings be not too quickly dismissed. The difficulty about identifying them as a source is that they did not so much invent mythological motifs as give them new significance in a fairly sophisticated theological synthesis. Dodds's feeling that, for example, the motif of the water-carriers in Hades 'was

lot in the next world. This will be better discussed in connexion with the *Republic*, which gives us in book 10 an elaborate myth of posthumous judgement and retribution, but in book 2 a trenchant criticism of those who hold out the bliss or torments of the next world as an inducement to good behaviour: justice ought to be commendable for its own sake, whether or not it is rewarded, or even known, by god or man.

<sup>1</sup> For σοφοί as Pythagoreans, see Dodds, *Gorg.* 297f. In *G. and G.* 311 n. 3, I have tried to defend against Dodds and earlier critics the view that the phrase σῶμα-σῆμα is ascribed to the Orphics by name at *Crat.* 400c. See Dodds, *G. and I.* 148, 169 n. 87, *Gorg.* 300.

<sup>2</sup> In his picture of the underworld at Delphi, described by Pausanias (10.31.9 and 11). On the relation of this myth to Orphism, see my *OGR* 161-3, and for possible original meanings of the myth Dodds, *Gorg.* 298f. P. liked to compare philosophers to the initiated (*Phaedo* 69c-d), as here he assigns them to the Islands of the Blest (526c).

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not the peculiar fancy of "Orphic sectaries" is doubtless correct. They had few 'peculiar fancies', and the question is the more delicate one of deciding whether Plato is likely to have snatched them from here and there, as floating articles of popular belief, or taken them from the Orphic writings which he knew and quotes more than once.<sup>1</sup> Since (as I believe in spite of *Rep.* 364e<sup>2</sup>) Plato was impressed by the new meanings which the writers had extracted from the old tales, this question is less trivial than it sounds, but it is not to be answered briefly. I tried to answer it in my *Orpheus and Greek Religion*,<sup>3</sup> and to summarize the case in *The Greeks and their Gods*, ch. 11.

Finally we must not of course assume that because some features of the myth are known to be taken from existing lore, it owed nothing to Plato's imagination. Among ideas most naturally to be credited to Plato himself Dodds notes<sup>4</sup> the unsuccessful attempts to judge men in the body and Zeus's consequent decision that the soul must face its judges naked, and the idea that it too can show scars and deformities.

On the character of the myth one cannot do better than quote Dodds (*Gorg.* 372 f.). It is 'the shortest and simplest, as it is the earliest, of Plato's eschatological myths. It displays none of the quasi-scientific trappings of the myths in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, but has the directness and vividness of folk-tale.' Reincarnation is not mentioned, but incurable sinners are punished everlastingly as dreadful examples for the benefit of others who see them, warnings to the unrighteous as they arrive. Dodds argues that since the living cannot see them, and for the dead it must be already too late, this 'makes sense only on the assumption that these dead will one day return to earth'. Yet the living do benefit, as Socrates would have Callicles benefit, by learning of them from inspired religious teachers or those like Plato who believed their word. Dives thought his brothers would repent if one of the dead, who had seen his torments, could go back to earth and tell them (Luke 16. 30), and Er, who narrates the great myth of the *Republic*, was just such a revenant. Moreover Orpheus, in whose name these eschatological truths were promulgated, had himself visited the underworld and seen its sights.

<sup>1</sup> The passages are collected in my *OGR* 12.

<sup>3</sup> The eschatology is reconstructed in ch. 5.

<sup>2</sup> See *OGR* 158f., 202 n., 242f.

<sup>4</sup> See also Jaeger, *Paideia* II, 152.

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Callicles, says Socrates (253a), will think the myth a mere tale (*mythos*) but he offers it as the truth. He reaffirms his belief in it at 524a, and at the end (527a) remarks that it might seem an old wives' tale not worth attention, if they could find anything better and truer; 'but they have failed to prove that any other life is better than this one, which is also to our advantage in the other world'. The truth lies not in a literal interpretation of the details of the story, but in the lesson it conveys, that the Socratic ethic is not only morally superior to the Calliclean but leads in the end to greater happiness for the individual. It is an extension of the argument into regions beyond the reach of dialectical discussion. Plato believes in immortality and even (in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*) that it can be proved dialectically; but what happens to the soul after death? In our ignorance we cannot do better than rely on the 'ancient and sacred stories' (*Ep.* 7.335a) as symbolic expressions of religious truths like divine justice. Plato's attitude here will be the same as that which he expresses in the *Phaedo* (114d): 'Now to maintain that these things are exactly as I have narrated them would ill befit a man of common sense; but that either this or something similar is the truth about our souls and their dwelling-places, that (*since the soul has been proved to be immortal*) does seem to me to be fitting, and to be a risk worth taking for the man who thinks as we do.'<sup>1</sup>

*Forms in the Gorgias?* In his *Paideia* Jaeger wrote (Eng. tr. II, 143, referring to 498d): 'as the *Gorgias* unmistakably teaches, the good is "that through whose presence good things<sup>2</sup> are good"; that is, it is the Idea, the ultimate shape of every good thing'. There are two errors here. First, it is people, not things (τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς masc., 498d2), that are made good, and secondly, it is not 'the good' through whose presence they are good, but 'good things' (pl.).<sup>3</sup> The word *parusia* (presence) suggested to Jaeger its use with a form or quality (white things are white through the presence of 'the white' or whiteness, etc;

<sup>1</sup> P.'s use of myth is dealt with at greater length in *OGR* 239-42.

<sup>2</sup> I have altered the published translation ('the good') here to make it clear that J. mistranslated ἀγαθοὺς at 498d2 as neuter. He wrote 'die guten Dinge'.

<sup>3</sup> The significance of the plural is pointed out by Dodds on 497e1. Neither he nor J. seems to have noticed the phrase μετέχει τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ at 467e7, which would have served J.'s purpose better, for it is a familiar phrase both in P.'s doctrine of transcendent forms and in Aristotle's criticism of it.

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see p. 151 above), and he could have strengthened his case by a reference back to 497e: 'Do you not call good men good because of the presence of good things, *just as* you call beautiful those to whom beauty is present?' In fact however the analogy is false, for the 'good things' are concrete and particular. To Callicles, for whom to be 'good' means to be bloody, bold and resolute, and enjoy the pleasures which wealth and absolute power will ensure, a man's worth *does* consist in his possession of good things. In the very next sentence Socrates asks: 'And by good things you mean pleasures, and by bad things pains?' He agrees, and is ultimately brought to the remarkable but logical conclusion that anyone who is enjoying himself is good and whoever feels pain is bad (499a).

Socrates is not getting Callicles to admit, even unawares, the existence of forms, whether immanent or transcendent. He is trying (successfully) to dislodge him from a position of extreme and consistent hedonism by reducing it to absurdity. If he had believed that 'the presence of good things' performed the same office as 'the presence of the good', he would have been guilty of the fallacy of Dionysodorus in the *Euthydemus* when he said that according to Socrates's theory the presence of an ox would make him an ox. (See p. 278 above.)

*Isocrates and the Gorgias.* Most scholars think there is some connexion between the *Gorgias* and the rival situations and ideas of Plato and Isocrates. To go further, and claim that the *Gorgias* attacks a particular work of Isocrates, or Isocrates attacks the *Gorgias*, is highly dangerous. There is no certainty about the relative chronology of their writings, nor even agreement about whether certain similarities of expression are accidental or not. The most likely to be a hostile allusion is *Gorg.* 463a, where Plato describes rhetoric in terms which sound like a parody of Isocrates, *In soph.* 17.<sup>1</sup> Who can doubt, asked Thompson (*Phaedr.* 174), that Plato is thinking of the Isocrates passage? But Dodds (*Gorg.* 225) follows Raeder and Jaeger in concluding that he is not.

It is safer and more interesting to take a rather wider view, and illustrate from some passages in Isocrates just how his outlook was

<sup>1</sup> ἐπιτήδευμα... ψυχῆς στοχαστικῆς καὶ ἀνδρείας. In Isocr. to become a really accomplished orator is ψυχῆς ἀνδρικῆς καὶ δοξαστικῆς ἔργον.

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related to Plato's in the *Gorgias* and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Both called their teaching *philosophia*, which immediately puts them into competition, since for Isocrates it meant above all rhetoric, which he actually equated with it at *Nic.* 1 and *Antid.* 183. Over-addiction to discussion, and the niceties of astronomy and geometry, he says (*Antid.* 264 ff., reminding us of Callicles at *Gorg.* 484c ff.), are well enough as training for boys, but they should beware of lingering too long over them and letting their talents become ossified.<sup>2</sup> (At *Panath.* 27 he condescends to say that even if these subjects do no positive good, at least they keep the young out of mischief.) One should not give the name philosophy to what does nothing to assist immediate speech or action. People blame oratory, he says (*Nic.* 1), as aiming at *pleonexia* (that getting more than or getting the better of others which Callicles so unscrupulously advocates). Deeds lead to more *pleonexia* than words, but in any case 'we reverence the gods and practise justice and the other virtues not to be worse off than others but to enjoy the good things of life'. Blame wrong action and deceitful speech but not 'self-interest virtuously pursued'. There is a moral tone here which was lacking in Callicles. *Pleonexia* can be good or bad (*Antid.* 281), and to seek advantage by robbery, cheating and other malpractices is not even successful: the reproach it incurs makes life a misery. True *pleonexia* is to serve the gods, maintain good relations with friends and citizens, and have an honourable reputation. Almost a Socratic paradox, but not quite. The misery of ill-doing comes from external pressures, not internal disharmony, and honourable ambition is to be rewarded by society. This is what he means when he says (*De pace* 31 f.) that justice and virtue are not only approved but contribute most powerfully to happiness. Whereas others (*Antid.* 84 f., presumably men like Plato) preach a kind of *sophrosynē* and justice known only to themselves, he boasts of preaching the virtues as universally recognized, and seeking to convert not just a few individuals but the whole city to act in a way which will bring happiness. Like the

<sup>1</sup> Some of these are cited by Thompson in his essay, *Phaedr.* app. 2, 170-83.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson p. 172 suggests that P. would have agreed about mathematics, since he too prescribed them not as ends in themselves but as part of a larger discipline. But Isocrates would hardly have approved of a curriculum that kept the students at mathematics for ten years, until the age of thirty, and did not consider them ready for public office until after five further years of Plato's dialectical philosophy.

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Sophist Protagoras, he would uphold the best of current morality, but not seek to change it. He even approves (surely with Plato's *bête noire* Pericles in mind, cf. Thuc. 2.63.2) of Athens choosing to rule others unjustly rather than submit to Sparta. All sensible men, he says, would advise this policy; only a few 'self-styled wise men' would oppose it. When he actually adds that of two imperfect courses it is better to make others suffer than to suffer oneself, it is hard to think that he has not a particular wiseacre in mind.

Another passage in the *Antidosis* (252 f.) seems to resemble the *Gorgias* too closely for coincidence, and also suggests that Plato is writing later and criticizing Isocrates. If men who have been taught to fight do not use their skill against the enemy but revolt and kill their own countrymen, or those well trained in boxing ignore the ring and hit anyone they happen to meet, one would still praise their trainers but blame those who misuse the training. It is the same with instruction in rhetoric. (Cf. *Gorg.* 456c-457c.)

All this must be borne in mind when we notice places in which Isocrates sounds remarkably Socratic. Such is *Antid.* 180: 'It is agreed that we are compounded of body and soul, and of these everyone would say that the soul is the more authoritative.'<sup>1</sup> The men of old, he continues, seeing that there were many arts but none specifically concerned with these two, invented training for the body, of which gymnastic is a part, and *philosophia* for the soul. This is very like *Gorg.* 464b, until we are told that *philosophia* is the art of mastering the techniques of oratory and using them to the best effect. Again, in the *Areopagiticus* (21 ff.) he recognizes the two kinds of equality (p. 301 above) and commends that which does not treat all alike but each according to his deserts, specifically condemning election by lot. This, he says, was the principle followed in the democracy of Solon and Cleisthenes.

After these superficial resemblances and fundamental differences, we may note a few more passages where he seems to be attacking Socrates and Plato without mentioning names. In *soph.* 8 is a tirade against people who among other things teach wisdom and happiness but are

<sup>1</sup> As I.'s words suggest, this was probably a commonplace. For Democritus see vol. II, 436 and DK's index (III, 483), and on the extent of S.'s originality vol. III, 469.

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themselves ill-provided, claim to know the future (? life after death) but have no practical counsel to give, who claim to have *knowledge* but make more mistakes than those who rely on *opinion* (*doxa*). Their occupation is rightly accounted mere petty quibbling, certainly not 'care for the soul' (τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιμέλειαν). To have *knowledge* in practical matters of speech and action, he says (*Antid.* 271), is humanly speaking impossible, and the truly wise are those who can in general hit on the best *opinions*. At the beginning of the *Helen* he contemptuously dismisses those who say that courage, wisdom and justice are the same and there is one knowledge of them all. It is likely too that, as many have believed, he applied the opprobrious term 'eristic' to Socrates himself and Plato as well as to other Socratics like the Megarians. At *Antid.* 261 ff. he damns eristics with a condescending tolerance, coupling them with astronomers and geometers, and a little earlier (258) he has complained that out of sheer jealousy they pour vulgar insults on the useful art of public speaking: he could easily return the compliment were he not too high-minded.

This not very edifying excursus should help us to remember that Plato saw the choice between the philosophic life and the life of active participation in public affairs, not only as a matter of theory, or even of the generally distasteful political atmosphere at Athens, but also in personal terms. No wonder that his expression was not always that which one traditionally expects from a philosopher.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE. WAS POLUS REFUTED? (474c ff.)

In an article under this title in *AJP* 1967, Vlastos has denied something that every other commentator believes, namely that once P. had admitted that inflicting injury was αἴσχιον than suffering it, he had given away his case (as Callicles says at 482d-e). The main burden of his acute and subtle argument is that κολόν has been defined as what either is useful or gives pleasure to him who contemplates it (ἐν τῷ θεωρεῖσθαι, 474d8), the viewer of visible beauty, hearer of music and so on, and αἰσχροόν is what either is harmful or gives pain. But then S. maintains that because the injured suffer pain and those who injure them do not, therefore, since inflicting injury is agreed to be αἴσχιον, it must be κάκιον. What he should have asked is not 'Which is the more painful to those immediately concerned as actor or



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sufferer?' but (and here I quote Vlastos) 'Which is the more painful *for those who observe or contemplate* the two events?' And to that question, says Vlastos, the answer is at least indeterminate.

My trouble with this is that whereas for the principals action and passion are divided, so that one acts and the other suffers, for the observer *there are not two events but one*, a single act of ἀδικία. Our observer cannot choose to watch someone robbing another without seeing a man being robbed, so there is not much point in asking 'which of the two events' is more painful to contemplate.

It may be that Vlastos means us to take into account not only the act of injury but its more distant consequences. This may be suggested by his saying that 'most people would be more pained at the sight or thought of *prospering* villainy [my italics] than of suffering innocence'. If however the prosperity and the suffering are known to be the direct outcome of the wrong inflicted (and otherwise they are not relevant), it is still not possible for the observer to say 'I see the wicked prospering by injuring others but I do not see the innocent suffering', as it is possible to say '*I* am the innocent victim, *he* is the villain'. May one recall the comment of a Cambridge cartoonist on the proposal to pay medical teachers at higher rates than those in other subjects? Said one incensed professor to another: 'It isn't their getting more than us that I mind, it's us getting less than them.' At the most one can ask which aspect of a single event is more painful to the observer.

I offer this comment without pronouncing on the general merits of Vlastos's suggestion. I am inclined to think, however, that if someone had reminded S. that there is pleasure to be had from the *possession* of a beautiful body and the *execution* of a piece of music as well as from seeing and hearing them, he would have assented without any fears for the effect on his argument.

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*Authenticity.* Everyone's first thought on encountering this strange production must be that it is not by Plato, and it was rejected by several in the nineteenth century, including Zeller. Of the present generation almost everyone accepts it,<sup>1</sup> regarding two references in Aristotle as decisive. (Both are in the *Rhetoric* and refer to 235d. At 1367b8 he

<sup>1</sup> Momigliano is (or was in 1930) an exception. In his article in *Riv. di filol.*, he concluded that it conflicts with *Phaedrus* and was produced in the Academy after Plato's death, inspired by a *Menexenus* which appears in D.L.'s list (6.18) of the works of Antisthenes. It is an attack on improvisation, mentioned at 235d. He mentions the Aristotle passages on p. 50.

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ascribes the dictum 'to praise Athenians before Athenians is not difficult' to Socrates, and at 1415b30 to 'Socrates in the *epitaphios*'.<sup>1</sup>) It appears in the 'canon of Thrasyllus' (p. 39 n. 2 above) and was universally accepted in antiquity,<sup>2</sup> and we should accept these testimonies to its genuineness rather than seek an easy way out of our difficulties by declaring it spurious.

*Date.* The work consists largely of a speech to rival the public eulogy of the dead in the Corinthian War which was due to be pronounced after the Peace of Antalcidas in 387.<sup>3</sup> It therefore 'dates itself precisely' (Wilam., *Pl.* I, 269) on the assumption that it would be pointless unless published at the time.<sup>4</sup> It should be noted how close this brings it to the *Gorgias*.

*Dramatic date.* This is the shock. It is Socrates who recites the speech, but the Peace of Antalcidas was concluded twelve or thirteen years after his death. It is also unlikely that Aspasia, the supposed author of the speech, was still alive. She bore a son to Pericles about 440 or earlier (Judeich in *RE* II, 1716 f.).

### *Conversational frame*

#### *(Direct dramatic form)*

Meeting the young Menexenus on his way from the Council-hall, Socrates infers that he is already following the family bent for politics, believing himself finished with education and philosophy.<sup>5</sup> Yes, he will seek office 'if S. allows and advises it', but his present purpose was to find out who is to pronounce the oration over the war-dead. In fact the

<sup>1</sup> See *Menex.* 235d. On the omission of Plato's name see Grote I, 209f., n. h. *Contra*, Zeller 2.1.461 n. 5, 480 n. 2. Aristotle too wrote a *Menex.* (D.L. 5.22), but as with Antisthenes we know only the title.

<sup>2</sup> Procl. in *Tim.* 1 p. 62 Diehl is not rejection by Proclus, as Loewenclau 10 n. 3 calls it, nor necessarily by anyone else. Some, says Pr., claim that S.'s style was precise and dialectical and he never attempted encomiastic speeches: they seem to me, he adds, to be both rejecting the *Menex.* (i.e. they *virtually* reject it?) and to be insensible to the eloquence of the *Phaedrus*.

<sup>3</sup> 245e. See Raeder, *PPE* 127 with n. 3.

<sup>4</sup> The only dissentient to this that I know is Diès, who thought the date suggested by the Peace 'déjà plus flottante' than that provided by the allusion to the dioecism of Arcadia in *Symp.* (*Autour de P.* 246f.).

<sup>5</sup> In this respect taking the advice of Callicles and Isocrates (p. 309 above).

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decision has been postponed. S. thinks it a fine thing to die in battle. You may be a contemptible character, but you are assured of a splendid tomb and have an excellent speaker praising you in a polished oration for non-existent virtues as well as any you may possess. These orators bewitch our souls with their indiscriminate laudations of the dead, the state, and their audience. They make us feel better and nobler, and it is several days before we come down from the clouds to earth again.

S.'s broad irony is not lost on M.: 'You will have your laugh at the orators', is his reply; but whoever is chosen, he continues, is not to be envied. With the ceremony so near, he will practically have to improvise. Nothing in that, says S. In the first place they all have a speech up their sleeves, and secondly, to improvise that sort of thing is easy enough. Could he do it himself then? Certainly, but perhaps he has an unfair advantage in having been taught by Aspasia, who coached the most outstanding orator of all, Pericles. Still, even a man more poorly trained, say by Antiphon of Rhamnus,<sup>1</sup> could praise Athenians among Athenians. Anyway, as it happens, only yesterday she made him learn by heart a speech which she had made up for this very occasion, partly improvising, partly 'pasting in' bits left over from the funeral speech which she composed for Pericles. M. is all agog to hear it, 'whether you call it Aspasia's or anyone else's'. S. is coy. She may not want it divulged, and anyway he will look ridiculous, 'still playing in his old age'. However, he will do it for M., at whose bidding he would be willing 'to take off my clothes and dance'.

After hearing the speech, M. expresses incredulity that Aspasia, whom he knows well, could have written it; but he is grateful to whoever did, and especially to S. himself. S. promises to recite more fine political speeches of Aspasia's if M. will keep his secret.

### *Summary and Comment*

Plato's contempt of rhetoric is as obvious here as in the *Gorgias*. It is attacked both directly and with sarcasm, nor is it pretended (as often in Plato) that the hearer does not see through the sarcasm. Rhetoric is

<sup>1</sup> The humour lies in rating Antiphon, perhaps the best orator of his day (Thuc. 8.68), well below Aspasia as a teacher of rhetoric.

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untruthful (aiming at persuasion not instruction, *Gorg.* 454e), easy (no art but a mere empirical knack, *Gorg.* 462b–c), beguiling the soul. In the *Phaedrus* (261a) it is given a name, *psychagogia*, which means just this, and in the *Gorgias* its injurious effect on the *psyche* is one of the main themes. When besides all this we are told that Pericles's intellectual consort 'ghosted' the most famous speech in all Greek literature and moreover that we are to hear another containing leftovers from it,<sup>1</sup> we are hardly in the mood to take it seriously. What Plato has prepared us for is a pastiche containing all the clichés, formal divisions, figures of speech and other technical rhetorical devices enumerated in the *Phaedrus* (266d–267d) and in content full of the *topoi* or commonplaces of the platform. And this is what we get. At the same time, some of the sentiments expressed, especially in the latter part, are such that many scholars believe they must be Plato's own, put forward in all earnestness. In fact to reconcile the introduction with the content of the speech has proved the crux of interpretation, and led to endless controversy.<sup>2</sup>

### The speech

The speech begins with the praise of the dead. Their goodness is due first to their noble birth, which they share with all Athenians through being autochthonous. The earth is literally their mother.<sup>3</sup> So we pass to

<sup>1</sup> A connexion between S. and Aspasia is also to be found in the *Aspasia* of Aeschines the Socratic. For its contents see Field, *P. and Contemps.* 150f., and for further study Dittmar, *Aisch.* 17–59. D. was convinced that the *Menex.* was written to ridicule (pp. 40f., 52, 56) or attack (55) Aeschines.

<sup>2</sup> Momigliano in *Riv. di fil.* 1930 rightly calls it 'la maggiore difficoltà' and 'il vero problema'. The champions of a satirical and of a serious interpretation of the speech are listed by Herter in notes 3 and 2 respectively to his article in *Paling.* 1969. (See also v. Loewenclau, *D. plat. Menex.* 10–13, 'Gesch. der Deutung'.) But the latter, as he says, though seeing 'a deeper Platonic background', have differed markedly as to its extent and nature. Kahn's five puzzles to be solved (*CP* 1963, 220) do not include this one. Nearest to it is the question why, if it is a joke, parody or satire, Cicero can say that in his time it was declaimed annually at Athens, and this he does not answer very adequately (p. 229). Herter considerably underestimates the ridicule in the prologue when he merely says (*l.c.* 110) that by it the validity of the speech (which he believes to have been intended seriously) 'in Frage gestellt wird'. There can be no question about it.

<sup>3</sup> For the Athenians' belief in their autochthony see Guthrie, *In the B.* 23f. The closest parallel in oratory to this *ne plus ultra* of nationalism (or racialism) is Isocr., *Paneg.* 24ff. and *Panath.* 124f. After the claim of autochthony he tells us that it is solely due to Athenian generosity that the rest of mankind have corn to eat and the mysteries to assure them happiness after death, Demeter having granted these gifts to Athens alone.

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praise of Athens. Even the gods strove for the possession of Athens, the only part of the earth which produced none of the lower animals, but only man, possessor of reason, justice, and religion; the only land, too, to produce grain and olives, the humane foods, which she afterwards imparted to others. As the first men, Athenians also had their own gods to instruct them in necessary arts. Their government, which has never changed, is a rule of the best (*aristokratia*), though sometimes called democracy. It honours freedom and treats all as the brothers and equals that they are. After a brief reference to the mythical achievements of Athens, we pass to her historic deeds from the time of the Persian Wars, down through the wars with other Greek states (caused by their jealousy of her prosperity) to the present day. As has often been noted, this part contains many distortions and suppressions of fact, all designed to show the Athenians as perfect, heroic in war, which they only undertook from the purest of motives, merciful in victory, and if defeated, never by the superiority of the enemy. The terrible deeds of the Thirty, and the revenge afterwards taken on them, are skimmed over as having manifested 'restraint', and as due to 'misfortune' not hatred. Athenian superiority is again attributed to their purity of blood: the other states are Greek in name only, being descended from barbarians – a Pelops, Cadmus, Aegyptus or Danaus. A similarly slanted account is given of the Corinthian War just ended.<sup>1</sup>

After praise of the dead and their motherland comes the address to the living. In the name of the dead the speaker exhorts their sons to excel in *aretē* and their parents not to grieve. Heaven has heard their prayers, which were that their children might be, not immortal, but valorous and of good report. 'If the dead perceive anything of the living', they will not be pleased to see their parents grieving for sons who have been granted a noble end. They will please them best by caring for their wives and children and leading better lives themselves. Returning to his own person the speaker reminds his hearers that the community has by law taken responsibility for both the ageing parents and the children of the dead. The children it will educate and launch into adult life armed with the instruments of their fathers' valour, which it will not let them

<sup>1</sup> For an enumeration of P.'s falsifications of history, see Méridier, *Ménex.* (Budé) 59–64.

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forget. Moreover it will honour the dead in perpetuity, combining the annual rites with athletic and musical contests. To the dead it constitutes itself heir, to their children father, to their parents guardian. Now let each pay his lawful due of mourning and depart.<sup>1</sup>

### *Comment*

The account in Thucydides (2.34) of how these public burials were conducted is impressive, not to say moving. Two days before the ceremony the bones of the fallen (the bodies having been burned after the battle, Jacoby in *JHS* 1944, 37 n. 1) were put in a temporary structure where people brought offerings to their own dead. At the funeral procession cypress-wood sarcophagi were carried on waggons, one for the bones of each tribe and an empty one for the 'unknown soldiers' whose bodies could not be recovered. Female relatives of the dead raised a lament, and anyone who wished, whether citizen or foreigner, might join the cortège, which proceeded to a state tomb in 'the city's most beautiful suburb', where the bones were laid. After their committal, a man of high reputation, chosen by the city, delivered an oration which closed the proceedings.

We may not like to think of Plato making fun of the orations pronounced on such an occasion of public mourning, but the prologue leaves no doubt that he did. It is, I should say, an outcome of the same mood of bitter disillusionment with Athens which provoked the *Gorgias* and is recalled in the Seventh Letter, a supposition strengthened by the probable dates of the two dialogues. Their relations have more than once been compared to those of tragic trilogy and satyr-play.<sup>2</sup> I am sure, too, that the little piece was motivated, at least in part, by immediate circumstances of which we are ignorant. The relations of Socrates with Aspasia are a mystery to us, but they were evidently of interest to his followers, and Aeschines wrote an *Aspasia* in

<sup>1</sup> The final words, κατὰ τὸν νόμον τοὺς τετελευτηκότας ἀπολοφυράμενοι ἄπιτε, may be compared with those of the Periclean funeral speech (Thuc. 2.46): ἀπολοφυράμενοι δὲ προσήκει ἐκάστῳ ἄπιτε. Another striking resemblance between the two is the praise of the Athenian constitution as being called a democracy but in fact a 'rule of the best' with the approval of the people (*Menex.* 238c-d) or with a view to the majority (Thuc. 2.37.1). See Vlastos, *Ison.* 28 with n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> By Dümmler, *Ak.* 26, Méridier, *Ménex.* 77, Dodds, *Gorg.* 24.

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which Socrates advises Callias to let her educate his son. Dittmar was so convinced that the *Menexenus* was written to ridicule and attack Aeschines that he felt he could safely date the *Aspasia* by it.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever we may think of the content of the speech, its character is given away in the prologue, namely that it is a representative specimen of contemporary oratory, the non-art described in the *Gorgias* as pandering, giving the people what they want to hear rather than what would do them good. It need not be a caricature. One may compare the *Protagoras*, where in the introductory scene Socrates paints a very unflattering picture of the Sophists, but the main encounter presents a fair and not unsympathetic portrait of Protagoras and his teaching. The point having been made, the reader is on his guard to observe the difference between the ideals of a Sophist and those of Socrates and Plato.

Given, then, that the purpose of the speech is inescapably determined by the introduction, I find all the necessary material for judging it in the account by Méridier.<sup>2</sup> After a brief tabulation of its themes, he shows that they reproduce in detail the traditional lay-out and content of such *pièces d'occasion*, and follow a plan laid down in the *technai*.<sup>3</sup> If there is parody, it is in the exaggerated rigour with which Plato sticks to the rules. Méridier also points out (64-6) how many things said in the encomium conflict with Plato's real opinions as expressed elsewhere. Passing to the style (69-71), he lists the artificial devices employed, so complete in their range 'that from the *Menexenus* one can make a complete study of the tricks of contemporary rhetoric'.

Following the usual, indeed obligatory, practice, the speech has two main divisions, the eulogy of the dead and of Athens and the consolation and advice to the living. Many scholars would admit that the first part

<sup>1</sup> Antisthenes also wrote an *Aspasia* (Dittmar 10ff.), but the extant fr. do not mention Socrates.

<sup>2</sup> *Ménex.* 53-82. The speech was earlier analysed by Pohlenz (*APW* 264-92), and von Loewenclau similarly takes us through it, pointing out parallels with Ps.-Lysias and others, though she reaches a very different conclusion.

<sup>3</sup> Oratorical handbooks (vol. III, 44). Besides references in other Greek literature, Thuc.'s version of the funeral oration of Pericles and the *Panegyricus* and *Panathenaicus* of Isocr., we have *epitaphioi* under the names of Lysias and Demosthenes, and one composed by Hyperides in 323 for the dead in the Lamian War.

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could be a mere pastiche, but are impressed by the apparent earnestness of the second. Unless it is to be supposed that Plato was mocking in the first half and serious in the second (and some have not even shrunk from that), they feel bound to look for a serious Platonic message throughout. Here too Méridier seems (if we keep the prologue still in mind) to have an adequate answer (71-3). He points out the features that recur in one or more of Thucydides, ps.-Lysias, ps.-Demosthenes and Hyperides. They include the concern of the city for its war-dead, the prayer of the parents for brave, not immortal, children, the consciousness of the dead in Hades, the mention of funeral games, and the closing formula. Some of the so-called Platonic sentiments are little more than commonplaces,<sup>1</sup> and in style the *consolatio* offers an equally rich treasury of rhetorical figures. That the general tone should be grave and solemn is hardly surprising in view of the occasion and the models whom Plato is copying.

Socrates, Méridier concludes, made it clear that the speech would be a *badinage*, and that far from wishing to provide the orators with a model, he would speak 'comme n'importe lequel entre eux'; the speech when it comes fulfils this promise. He adds some telling quotations from the *Gorgias*: 'To which kind of service do you call me? To withstand the Athenians for their own good or to speak to them obsequiously in a way that will please them?' (521 a). 'Whenever I speak, it is not to please. I aim at the best, not the most agreeable, and since I will not use these clever tricks which you advise, if I am brought to court I shall not know what to say' (521 d). 'Every form of pandering, whether to oneself or others, is to be shunned' (527 c). The author of the flattery of the Athenians in the *Menexenus* would not have lost his life like the man who called himself their gadfly and set himself to 'wake them up, persuade them and reprove them' (*Apol.* 30 e).

The seriousness with which the speech was taken in antiquity has been felt as an objection to this view. 'We are invited', says Huby

<sup>1</sup> For instance 246 e, 'All knowledge divorced from justice and the rest of *aretē* is rascality, not *sophia*.' As Méridier points out (72), Gorgias himself recognized that an orator ought to serve the ends of justice, and we may add the views attributed to Protagoras at *Prot.* 324 e (p. 281 n. 3 above). And would Socrates or P., who believed that knowledge *cannot* be separated from virtue, have put it in just this way? The sentiment is rather like the oxymoron in the *Bacchae*, τὸ σοφὸν δ' οὐ σοφία.



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(*Phron.* 1957, 104), to regard Dionysius of Halicarnassus<sup>1</sup> and Hermogenes as fools. . . and finally to admit that Plato's satire was so subtle that it was interwoven with many passages that are not satirical at all.' Well, in the first place Plato is not satirizing in the sense of caricaturing.<sup>2</sup> He is producing a 'straight' copy of these stylized orations, easy to write because following recognized rules, always saying the expected, much of it untrue and all of it, in his eyes, 'pandering' (κολακεία). Read in the light of the *Gorgias*, of the impassable gulf between rhetoric and Socratic philosophy, cookery and medicine, they condemn themselves. Socrates, it is true, sometimes chose to argue on his opponents' ground, but it is incredible that Plato, holding the opinion of rhetoric that he did, would have used it as a vehicle, introducing his own moral into its 'pandering' and falsification of history, of which the *Menexenus* has its full share. The speech is certainly not the 'true rhetoric' of the *Phaedrus*, which is philosophy. I see no better explanation of this astonishing little piece (which is, let us admit, of no great importance save as an illustration of Plato's versatility) than this, that as by argument in the *Gorgias*, so here by example, by faithfully following the spirit and method of the traditional *epitaphios*, he has warned of the dangers of an eloquence that poisons the soul by flattery instead of seeking to enlighten it, and condemned the Athenians who complacently accept its false compliments.

It is in this connexion that Méridier would explain the notorious anachronism, which others have taken as an announcement that Plato is speaking in his own person with a positive message for the contemporary situation. The impossibility, he says, of Socrates living and talking in 386 B.C. is meant to underline the author's mocking intention.

The wide variety of interpretations proposed by qualified and intelligent scholars, each seeing a drawback in the views of the others, is evidence that no conclusion can be free of difficulty. To some the verdict of antiquity will be the stumbling-block to the view expressed

<sup>1</sup> Méridier notes (71) that Dion. Hal. severely criticized the first part but expressed great admiration for the second. This praise from a literary and rhetorical critic is a doubtful aid to the advocates of a genuinely Platonic interpretation; and even he disapproved of the continued use of the well-worn rhetorical figures.

<sup>2</sup> As Méridier says (75), were it really a caricature it could not have called forth the contrasting opinions which it has in modern times. 'It applies the school techniques precisely, and with a sureness of touch that can be deceptive.'

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(not of course for the first time) here, as to which one strange testimony from a later century has still to be mentioned. Cicero, speaking of hiatus (*Or.* 44.151), says that not only Thucydides, but even Plato, a greater writer, allowed it, and 'not only in the dialogues, where it was needed for a purpose, but in the public speech in which it is Athenian custom for the dead in battle to be eulogized at an open meeting; which was so well thought of that, as you know, it has to be recited on that day every year'. It is not surprising that some scholars have regarded the last clause as an interpolation,<sup>1</sup> and they may be right. If not, one may still sympathize with Jacoby who, though he thought it likely that the custom of annual rites and speech was revived in the second century, added that 'it is more difficult to decide what to do with Cicero'.<sup>2</sup> He may (as Jacoby's note suggests) have got his facts wrong. Otherwise I can only suppose, again with Méridier, that the Athenian public was still much as Plato knew it (and in its fallen state it was probably even more nostalgic over its past glories). Always greedy for praise, it was not inclined to be over-critical – and, one might add, was as ready to ignore or belittle the effect of the prologue as many modern scholars. Difficulties will remain, but the one insurmountable difficulty in the way of looking for any positive Platonic message in 'Aspasia's' speech is the clear warning given by Socrates himself. That and the *Gorgias* must be the determining factors in our judgement.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE: SOME MODERN VIEWS

It would be impracticable to list the contradictory verdicts of scholarship with any degree of completeness, but to give the reader a glimpse of their variety, and direct him to the means of estimating alternatives to the view taken here, I append a brief statement of a few of the more recent interpretations (which should, of course, be judged in the context of the

<sup>1</sup> For their names see Méridier 77, Huby, *Phron.* 1957, 105. On the slipshod 'illo die' see next note.

<sup>2</sup> *JHS* 1944, 65 with n. 137: 'It might', he goes on, 'be a confusion with an annual lecture for the epheboi. The lecture *may* have been established by a clause in the decree *assumed* above.' (My italics.) This does not sound a promising explanation. 'Illo die' presumably does not mean that the Athenians still celebrated the anniversary of the Peace of Antalcidas, but refers to a general 'Remembrance Day'. Nevertheless, for a self-conscious stylist like Cicero, it fits oddly into the sentence, having no expressed antecedent.

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complete arguments of their authors). Ample references to others will be found in the works here cited.

*Popper.* The whole speech is a parody of Pericles, with political intent ('that sneering reply to Pericles' funeral oration'). Plato the hater of Athenian democracy *must* have been ironical when he spoke of it as really a rule of the best, and of legal equality as based on natural equality. But he gives himself away: he was seriously impressed by the creed of the open society, and had to struggle to remind himself that he was really one of its enemies. (See *The Open Society*, vol. 1, 5th. ed. 1966, 96, 255 f.)<sup>1</sup>

*Pamela Huby (Phron. 1957).* Plato's main concern is revealed when he comes to speak of the state's obligations towards the war-orphans. There was a danger that in its straitened circumstances the state might be contemplating economies in this direction, and Plato as a humane man was strongly against such a course.

*N. Scholl (Der plat. Menex. 1959).* The speech departs in some important points from traditional *epitaphioi* and is *not* (his italics, p. 68) a typical rhetorical *epideixis*. In spite of resemblances in detail, its spirit is alien to rhetoric and it shows unmistakable connexions with Socratic philosophy.

*I. von Loewenclau (Der plat. Menex. 1961).* The glorification of Athens must not be thought of as falsification of history, because what Plato has in mind is not historical Athens at all, but her 'ideal archetype' (p. 90). She is 'the true home of the philosophic man, the pure inner essence of Athens seen as Idea' (p. 57).

*C. H. Kahn (CP 1963).* 'Essentially an almost Demosthenic appeal to the Athenians of 386 to prove themselves worthy of the noblest traditions of their city' (p. 226).<sup>2</sup> 'A kind of political pamphlet, written out of deep loyalty to the noblest traditions of Athens, but out of heartbreak, shame and fury at the present policy of the city.'

<sup>1</sup> Levinson has published a reply to Popper in *Defense* App. 1x, 'The Political Import of the *M.*' I had intended to mention these views without comment, but must point out an error on Popper's p. 256. Plato does not 'say of S. that he was a pupil of. . . Antiphon'. He says that as a pupil of Aspasia he was better trained than any pupil of Antiphon (236a).

<sup>2</sup> K. was especially impressed by 'the unmistakable earnestness of the final passages', which Wilamowitz (*Pl.* 1, 267) found 'remarkably cold and conventional': Thucydides, he thought, spoke in much more moving terms.

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G. Vlastos in 1964 (*Isonomia* 22–32) returned to the view that ‘Plato is parodying the glorification of Athens in patriotic oratory’ (24–5). On any other hypothesis the performance would be inexplicable.

H. Herter (*Palingenesia* 1969, 110f.) thinks that von Loewenclau went rather far with her ‘Idea of Athens’ but was on the right lines. The speech is seriously meant, and Athens is idealized ‘as far as is possible in the realm of *doxa*, to which she belongs’. ‘So Plato created his primeval Athens (*Urathen*), admittedly at the cost of giving out as true what had only inner truth and no historical reality.’

## VI

# PHAEDO, SYMPOSIUM, PHAEDRUS

### INTRODUCTORY

Each dialogue of Plato is a self-contained, organic unity, yet each is bound to its fellows by a subtle web of interconnecting threads. The *Phaedrus* might be said to be closely linked with the *Gorgias* and *Menexenus* because its professed subject is rhetoric and it includes two speeches composed by Socrates himself in avowed competition with Lysias. It also contains some remarks on philosophic method which some see as looking forward to the *Sophist*. But as Socrates would say, a speech must be *about* something, and the subject of the speeches in the *Phaedrus* is the same as of those in the *Symposium*, namely love. The *Phaedo* and *Symposium*, again, could not be further apart in mood, since the one shows Socrates discussing immortality with intimate friends in his last few hours on earth and in the other we see him some seventeen years earlier, un-Socratically spruced up, at a celebration dinner-party where there are plenty of high spirits and conversation both philosophical and unphilosophical. What unites all three to each other more closely than to any other dialogue, except perhaps the *Republic*, and has led me to group them together here, is their preoccupation with the eternal world of transcendent being, and the progress of the soul from earthly desires and ambitions, and beliefs derived from bodily sensation, towards the true and lasting happiness which lies in the apprehension of knowledge by the mind alone, and the vision, or possession, not of good or beautiful things and people but of the unchanging essence of goodness and beauty themselves. All culminate in this, yet each remains unique. With Diotima's talk of beauty and goodness we must take the realistic portraits of Socrates and his friends in their cups, not forgetting that it is immediately followed by the entry of the drunken Alcibiades, with his wreath slipping over his eyes; and in the *Phaedrus* we pass, with the ease of two friends conversing by a stream in the heat of a

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Greek summer day, from the soul's flight to the Plain of Truth beyond the heavens to the technicalities of rhetoric and the methods of dialectical inquiry.

### (I) THE PHAEDO

*Date.* The variety of opinions on the relative dates of the *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Republic* shows how difficult it is to separate them, though *Phaedrus* is now generally thought to be the latest. Of the *Phaedo* and *Symposium* some say they are so close that no one can tell which came first. Of the five lists given by Ross (*PTI* 2), only one puts *Phaedo* earlier, but more recent opinion has veered the other way.<sup>1</sup> Its absolute date is even more uncertain. Most would put it after Plato's first sojourn in the West, and if (as can hardly be doubted) it was written later than the *Gorgias*, then not immediately after, but even this is doubtful.<sup>2</sup> For a summary of stylometric evidence see Hackforth, *Phaedo* 8.

*Scene and characters.* Those present are listed in vol. III, 489.<sup>3</sup> Some of them are already old acquaintances. Crito revealed his character in the *Crito* and *Euthydemus*, Ctesippus his in *Lysis* and *Euthydemus*, and we have met Menexenus in *Menexenus* and *Lysis*. Hermogenes we shall hear in the *Cratylus*, Euclides is narrator in *Theaetetus* and the emotional Apollodorus in the *Symposium*. Simmias and Cebes, pupils of the Pythagorean Philolaus,<sup>4</sup> had offered money to help

<sup>1</sup> Wilamowitz (*Pl.* I, 320) and Robin in the Budé *Phaedo* (1926, p. vii) thought them too closely related for a decision, though in his *Symp.* (1929, viii) R. infers from the mentions of Apollodorus that *Symp.* came first. Leisegang (*RE* 2431) quotes Wilamowitz but considers J. Hirschberger 'has shown' that *Phaedo* is the earlier. Among recent edd., Hackforth (p. 7) and Bluck (144 f.) are cautious, but think *Phaedo* preceded.

<sup>2</sup> The reason of course is its Pythagorean flavour, but Morrison in *CQ* 1958 put it before the western journey, claiming that Pythagoreanism was still reaching P. through Phlius and Thebes; in *Rep.* and *Phaedr.* it is different in detail because learned by direct contact with Italy. He may be right, and it is true that the Pythagoreans named in *Phaedo* all belong to the mainland; but it is a bizarre suggestion that if P. had just come back with his head full of Italian ideas he might have given it a West Greek setting. Whatever else he aimed at, he wanted above all to describe the last hours and death of his hero in the Athenian prison.

<sup>3</sup> For some views on Plato's absence see *ib.* n. 2, Wilam., *Pl.* I, 235, Jowett I, 403, Friedl., *Pl.* III, 36.

<sup>4</sup> See 61 d-e. Grube (*P.'s Th.* 294) argues that they were not Pythagoreans. They were certainly not very understanding pupils, and sometimes speak from the popular rather than the Pythagorean conception of the soul. But on the point that Sim. brings forward the ψυχή-ἀμυνία doctrine as an objection to survival after death, see vol. I, 309 ff.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

Socrates to escape (*Crito* 45b) and here play a major part in the discussion. Simmias is also mentioned at *Phaedrus* 242b. The narrator Phaedo was said to have founded a school of philosophy at Elis, and to have written at least one Socratic dialogue.<sup>1</sup> The byplay with his hair (89a–b) shows his relations with Socrates in an attractive light. His listener Echecrates was another Pythagorean.<sup>2</sup>

The scene of the narration is evidently not Athens (57a–b), and probably Phaedo is visiting Echecrates at Phlius. The talk narrated takes place in the Athenian prison on the day of Socrates's execution, and as usual with Plato there are graphic touches to remind us where we are and whom we are listening to – for instance the picture of Socrates crooking and rubbing his leg, just freed from the fetters, and remarking on the paradoxically close relationship of pleasure and pain (60b). Other memorable touches are the gathering of the friends outside the prison, the passages between Xanthippe and Socrates, the interruption from the executioner at 63d, the incident of Phaedo's hair and the ensuing conversation; above all the final scene: Socrates taking a bath to save the women trouble when he is a corpse, the gaoler's emotional farewell, and of course the cheerful composure of Socrates throughout. Bluck warned against treating the *Phaedo* as literature to the detriment of its philosophy, but the tendency of the most recent criticism is rather the other way. As we immerse ourselves in the intricacies of Plato's attempts to prove the soul's immortality by rational arguments, or the doctrine of Forms or the method of hypothesis, we must never forget that we are witnessing the last hours on earth of, in his opinion, the best and wisest man he had ever known (see the final words), and one who (unlike most philosophers today) regarded philosophy, rightly pursued, as a 'training for death' (64a).

### *The dialogue*

(*The main dialogue is in reported form, with a direct dramatic introduction of which we are reminded by two short interludes at 88c and 102a.*)

Phaedo explains to Echecrates the reason for the delay in Socrates's

<sup>1</sup> Strabo 9.8 (393), D.L. *Proem.* 19. For his *Zopyrus* see vol. III, 397 with n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. I, 273, 310. Though generally called a Phliasian, he is mentioned by Cicero among the Pythagoreans whom Plato visited at Locri (*De fin.* 5.29.87). In a single chapter of his *V.P.* (267, DK I, 446f.) Iamblichus calls him Phliasian and Tarentine.

## The *Phaedo*

execution (vol. III, 384f.), and describes his own strangely mixed feelings at the death of a man who seemed so happy in the knowledge of a better lot awaiting him. After naming the others present, he narrates the conversation.

A mention of Aesop's fables reminded Cebes to ask S. why he has been writing poetry, including a versification of Aesop and a hymn to Apollo. It was in response to a repeated dream in which he was ordered to 'make music'. He had supposed this to refer to philosophy,<sup>1</sup> but in case the divine injunction had been intended more narrowly thought he would spend the time before death in this way. His last message to Euenus (for whom C. is speaking) is that if he is a philosopher he should follow him to death as soon as he can, short of actual suicide, which 'they say' is wicked. Asked to explain the paradox that death is a blessing but suicide wicked, he is surprised that C. and Simmias have not learned this from Philolaus. He can only repeat what he has heard, but it is fitting enough for one in his position to inquire into and 'tell stories about' (μυθολογεῖν) our migration from 'here' to 'there'. The idea is that the gods are our keepers and have put us here, and we must not try to escape the lot to which they have called us. But if a god is our master, and caring for us, why should an intelligent man *want* to run away? Simmias adds that this is a gentle reproach to S. himself, who seems to take so lightly his departure from his friends and his masters the gods.

Well, he must try to defend himself more convincingly than he did in court. His attitude is based on a sure faith that he will still be with gods, and a hope that he will also meet good men; that there is a life after death and a better one for the good than the bad. Philosophy, in fact, rightly pursued, is a preparation for death. (The agreement of this with the popular notion of philosophers makes Sim. laugh in spite of his sadness.)

To explain. Death (they agree) is the separation of *psyche*<sup>2</sup> from

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Apol.* 33c (ἐξ ἐνυπνίων), 28e. The Greek *musikē* of course includes poetry. Merlan in *JHI* 1947, 425, is interesting on this.

<sup>2</sup> Usually translated 'soul', as it will usually be rendered here; but for S. (and P. so long as he treated it as a unity) it was rather mind or intelligence. See vol. III, 469 with n. 3, and cf. 67c3, where διάνοια is used for what is elsewhere called ψυχή. This however will not do as a regular translation, because in discussing its immortality S. and his friends have in mind



body. But the philosopher's concern is with the *psyche*, which even in this life he makes as far as possible independent of the body, whose pleasures and demands he despises. His aim being wisdom and truth, he will look beyond the deceitful witness of the senses and the distraction of the emotions, and trust to reasoning, which works best when untroubled by hearing or sight, pleasure or pain – in short, by the body. Further, 'the just itself', and similarly the beautiful and the good are realities. So also size, health, strength and other things have a *being*, that which each one truly is; and one cannot perceive the truth about them through the bodily senses but only by discarding these as far as possible in favour of pure thought. Complete knowledge cannot be attained in this life, but if we have done all we can to cleanse the soul from bodily taint, we shall have come as near it as possible, and be ready, when God releases us, for its full revelation. It would be absurd then for a philosopher, whose lifelong aim has been to free his *psyche* as far as possible from contamination by the body, to repine when this freedom is granted in full.

Anyone who repines at death is a lover of the body, full of worldly desires and ambitions. Such men have only a semblance of the virtues – courage, *sophrosynē* and the rest – which the philosopher possesses in reality. They face danger through fear of worse, and control their appetite only lest they lose some greater pleasure. This hedonistic calculus (pp. 233 f. above) ignores the one true standard of value, namely wisdom, which is not a judgement between earthly pains and pleasures but a purging away of all alike.

Fine, says Cebes, *provided* that the *psyche* does survive the body and is not annihilated at death; but people might take a good deal of convincing that once a man is dead his *psyche* not only exists but retains some power and intelligence. So the arguments for immortality are begun.

(i) *The argument from alternation* (70c–72e). Can we support rationally the old religious doctrine of reincarnation, which teaches

also its popular use to mean *life*, or that which animates the body. That its association with sense-perception, physical desires etc. is due solely to its incarnation is their own peculiar conception of it.

that our souls do exist in the next world and are in due course reborn in this? Well, it is a general rule that opposites are generated from opposites: what *becomes* just or beautiful must have been unjust or ugly, what becomes bigger must have been smaller and so on. There are then two contrary processes at work, growth and diminution, heating and cooling, falling asleep and waking up. Life and death may be compared to the waking and the sleeping state.<sup>1</sup> The process of passing from life to death is as familiar as falling asleep, and must there not be a contrary process corresponding to waking up? If so, and the living come from the dead as the dead from the living, the dead must continue to exist in the meantime. Moreover, if there were dying but no rebirth, life would ultimately cease, just as if falling asleep were not succeeded by reawakening: Endymion's lot would be that of all mankind.

(ii) *The argument from recollection* (72e–77e). This reminds C. of S.'s claim that learning is really recollection of things previously known. The evidence is that people if skilfully questioned, particularly about geometrical problems, will produce the right answers out of their own heads. S. elaborates. When something reminds us of something else because of a resemblance (e.g. a portrait of Sim. recalls Sim. to our minds), we are aware of any imperfections in the resemblance (because we know the original). Now take two things – sticks or stones, say – called equal. We know that equality<sup>2</sup> exists, in and by itself – not simply in its physical manifestations – and we do not believe that the so-called equal objects are identical with it. We may dispute whether they *are* equal, and we know that they are never *perfectly* equal, whereas no one could think that equality was inequality. Nevertheless it is from these physical objects that we acquire our conception of equality. If however we recognize that certain things are 'striving' to be like something else but only imperfectly succeeding, we must have had previous knowledge of that something else; and since our acquaintance with the individual copies, by which

<sup>1</sup> For a criticism of this argument see J. Wolfe, 'A Note on P.'s "Cyclical Argument"' in *Dialogue* 1966, 237f., and T. M. Robinson in same journal (1969–70), 124f.

<sup>2</sup> Here lit. 'the equal' (τὸ ἴσον) and a few lines lower down the noun 'equality' (ἰσότης). For P. these expressions were equivalent. Cf. p. 119 above.

we recovered the conception of it, depends on the senses, which have been active since birth, our foreknowledge of perfect equality must have been acquired before birth.

In reply to an objection that this proves pre-existence but not survival after death, S. suggests they combine it with the previous argument from alternation or the cyclic character of life and death. (It has added what that argument lacked, that the soul not only survives but retains some power and intelligence.) However, he suspects that they are not yet rid of the childish fear that the soul is a kind of vapour which the wind takes and scatters when it leaves the body – especially if one happens to die in a gale! So he is prepared to take the matter further.

(iii) *The argument from affinity between soul and the invisible realities: the philosopher's pilgrimage (78b–84b).* What is liable to destruction by dispersion is the composite. What is simple does not risk this fate. The realities we have spoken of – the equal itself, the beautiful itself etc. – exist by themselves, are uniform and completely changeless, in strong contrast to their individual instances (beautiful people, horses, clothes etc.). They are moreover imperceptible to sight or any other sense. Now our bodies belong to the visible realm, our souls to the invisible. When the soul, instead of studying mutable objects through the bodily senses, is allowed to contemplate, as pure intelligence, unchanging and immortal being, in that pure region it is among its kindred and itself becomes constant in its relationship to them. Besides this, nature ordains that in this life the body should be ruled by the soul,<sup>1</sup> which again suggests that the soul resembles the immortal and divine, the body the mortal.<sup>2</sup> Yet even the corruptible body does not suffer decomposition at once, and may be preserved almost indefinitely.

<sup>1</sup> This is a Socratic point. See vol. III, 471 f. (*Alc. I*). I do not doubt myself that S. also drew the conclusion about the soul's immortality. Did Isocrates also profit by his teaching, or was it more widespread? At *Anid.* 180 soul as the deliberating power is ἡγεμονικώτερον, and the body's function is to obey soul's decisions. On this relationship between soul and body, see further Patterson, *P. and I.* 76f.

<sup>2</sup> Note that the contrast is between θεῖον (θεῖον καὶ θάνατον a few lines later) and θνητόν. It is important to remember that this is normal Greek usage. To be immortal is to be divine. Cf. Guthrie, *G. and G.* 115f.

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So the soul of the philosopher, whose life has been a 'training for death', having made itself as independent of the body as possible, will gain, on leaving it, that pure and invisible region and live with gods, freed from the tribulations of human existence. Those on the other hand who have indulged the body and its lusts and shunned the invisible and intelligible, depart so polluted and weighed down by the corporeal that they must haunt the visible realm (perhaps even visible themselves, if the ghost-stories are true) until reincarnated in a body suited to their character. Philosophy, finding the soul looking at the world through the bars of an ingenious prison so designed that the prisoner's own desires make him cooperate in his imprisonment, helps to release it by showing the deceitfulness of the senses and of all desires and emotions, which make the man take for real and true what is not so. Pleasures and pains are like nails fastening soul to body and cutting it off from communion with the divine and pure and simple. *This* is why philosophers resist the body's lures, not like the rest through fear of poverty or disgrace.<sup>1</sup>

*Two objections (84c–88b).* A long silence ensues, then S., observing Sim. and C. whispering together, tells them to speak out if they are not satisfied: doubtless there are a number of weak points. Thus encouraged, and relieved of the fear that the subject may be disagreeable to S. in his present circumstances, they state their doubts in turn. Sim. is bothered by the theory that soul (life) results simply from the blending in a particular proportion (*harmonia*) of the physical properties – hot and cold, dry and moist – that characterize the body's elements. It cannot therefore outlast the dissolution of the body any more than the melody played on a lyre can outlast the strings and frame, though in comparison with them it could be called invisible, incorporeal, beautiful and divine. C. reminds them that the body is constantly being renewed, so that in a way the soul *has* outlasted many bodies in a normal span of life.<sup>2</sup> It is in fact the soul, both

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Prot.* 353d–e and pp. 219f., 234 above.

<sup>2</sup> This point about the periodical renewal of the body in this life is made by Diotima-Socrates in *Symp.* (207d), who however applies it also to the *psyche* itself. See pp. 390–2 below.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

stronger and more durable than the body, which restores the worn-out tissue as a weaver weaves the cloth for a new coat when his old one wears out; and it would be absurd to argue that because a man is longer-lived than a coat, the survival of his last coat is evidence that the man himself has not perished. On this view the final corruption of the body is *caused* by the fact that the soul no longer exists to keep it together. Even granted reincarnation, implying that a soul is strong enough to outlast a number of births and deaths, who knows that these experiences may not have affected it, so that one final death will bring about its extinction? And whether it is the one we are about to undergo, no one can say. What needs to be shown is that soul is not only more enduring than body but *essentially immortal and indestructible*.

*Interlude and warning against misology (88c-91c).* At this point the listener Echecrates interrupts the main narrative to express his sympathy with the company's dismay on hearing these objections. He himself has been attracted by the conception of soul as a *harmonia*, and longs to know if it can survive death. Ph. resumes. Never has he admired S. so much as at that moment, the respect with which he received the young men's arguments, his quick perception of their distress, and the manner of his healing it. First, stroking Ph.'s long hair, he advised him to cut it at once, in mourning not for S. but for the discussion, if they failed to bring it back to life. One must not become 'misologist' through the failure of one or two arguments, just as being badly let down by friends may make a man misanthropic, turning against all mankind. Rather than reject all reasoned argument, let us blame our own lack of skill (*technē*), and above all aim at truth, not at scoring off an opponent.

*Reply to Simmias (91c-95a).* After a brief recapitulation of the objections raised, S. points out to Sim., *first*, that the theory that soul is only the 'attunement' of the bodily parts or elements is incompatible with the *anamnesis* doctrine, and he must choose between them. An attunement cannot exist before the elements of which it is an attunement. Sim. chooses *anamnesis*, declaring that the other was

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specious but unproved, whereas the doctrine that learning is recollection rests on a premise worthy of acceptance. *Secondly*, if the strings of a lyre can be more or less precisely tuned, the result is more or less of an attunement, but every soul is equally fully a soul. And how can one explain virtue and vice in a soul? By saying that virtue is a second attunement, and vice a non-attunement, *within* the basic attunement which constitutes the soul itself? If soul is an attunement, then logically every soul should be good. *Thirdly*, an attunement, literal or figurative, being an epiphenomenon, can only reflect the properties and powers of its parts: the melody of a lyre depends on the physical tension of the strings. But soul takes the initiative, controlling and often opposing the body and its desires.

*Reply to Cebes: the argument from the Forms (95a-107a).* S., after recapitulating C.'s argument, paused for a long while in thought. C.'s demand, he said, to be shown that the soul is essentially indestructible, opens up a very large prospect, for it involves investigating quite generally the cause of becoming and perishing. It may help if he tells them something of his own intellectual history. As a young man he was an enthusiast for natural philosophy and its claims to know these ultimate causes, eagerly weighing the rival materialist theories of the origin of life and mind, or the nature of earth and sky. The only result was to make him feel he no longer understood what he thought he knew before he began, e.g. that a human being grew by absorbing food and water and transforming them into flesh and bone, or that two comes about by bringing one to one, when the division of one produces the same result.

When he heard of Anaxagoras positing Mind as first cause, he thought he had found what he needed, namely a teleological explanation. Mind would certainly have ordered things for the best, so if one wanted to find out, e.g. the shape and situation of the earth, one would simply have to ask how and where it was *best* for it to be. He found, however, that Anaxagoras ignored Mind in the rest of his work, and alleged only material factors like the rest, confusing necessary conditions with causes, as if to say that S. is actuated by mind and then explaining his present position by the physiological mechanism

of sitting rather than by his decision to await his fate instead of going into exile.

He finally decided that by looking at phenomena<sup>1</sup> direct he was in danger of being blinded like those who try to look at an eclipse of the sun. Just as they must see it reflected in a medium, so he would look at objects as reflected in reasoned argument<sup>2</sup> – not that the analogy is exact, for he will not admit that to investigate reality in this way is to be content with reflections or images any more than if one looks at objects themselves. His method is to assume in every case – causality or anything else – the statement (*logos*) which he judges the least assailable, and put down as true everything that agrees with it and as false what does not.<sup>3</sup> To be more explicit, his hypothesis is the independent existence of ‘a good’ (beautiful, large and so on) ‘by itself’ and from this familiar and agreed doctrine he hopes to show cause that the soul is immortal. All he will assert, naïvely perhaps but safely, is that things become beautiful by the beautiful<sup>4</sup> itself [absolute beauty or however we like to name it in English], whatever its mode of operation, and the same with large and so on. To go further and say a thing is made beautiful by colour or shape, or that *x* is taller than *y* by a head, is only confusing: one finds, for example, that the same thing makes *x* taller and *y* shorter. Similarly if one thing becomes two, or eight ten, or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  yards 2 yards, the cause is not division or addition but simply participation in duality, quantity or length. Any questioning of the hypothesis itself should be ignored until the mutual consistency of its consequences has been investigated. (To discuss a premise and its results in the same breath is confusing, and a mark of eristics.) Then it can be justified by the same method,

<sup>1</sup> I follow the majority in taking τὰ ὄντα at 99d5 to stand for natural objects, not in its Platonic sense. τῶν ὄντων at 97d7, referred to by Burnet, is a doubtful parallel, since in his then state of mind S. did believe that he would learn from Anaxagoras the causes of what really existed. Archer-Hind understood it Platonically: “‘realities’”, he wrote, ‘i.e. from P.’s point of view the true causes, τὰγαθὸν καὶ δέον’; but as Burnet said, the point is that S. gave up the study of nature, and his ‘second best’ turns out to be the theory of Forms. The matter seems to be clinched when the same things are said just below to be perceived by the senses.

<sup>2</sup> On the meaning of *logoi* see p. 352 n. 1 below.

<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of συμφωνεῖν, and defence of this procedure, on the assumption that ‘hypothesis’ is being used in its technical geometrical sense, see Sayre, *PAM* 20–8.

<sup>4</sup> At 102b the word εἶδος, ‘form’, is used for the first time (by Phaedo) to designate the absolute, independently-existing properties hitherto referred to by such phrases as αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν.

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choosing a higher hypothesis as seems best until a satisfactory one is reached.

Next: (1) An individual can possess contrary properties, e.g. tallness and shortness according to the object of comparison; but a Form, whether by itself or in a particular, can only be qualified by itself. (The earlier doctrine of 70e, that things are generated from their opposites, applied, we are reminded, to particulars.) On the 'advance' of its opposite, it must either retreat or perish.<sup>1</sup> (2) There are other things which must always be characterized by a certain Form, though not identical with it. Thus snow, though not identical with coldness, must always be cold, and on the approach of heat will either withdraw or perish, as fire on the approach of cold. Again, three and five, though not the opposite of two and four, must possess the Form of oddness: they cannot become even and remain themselves. There are, then, besides opposite Forms, things which always bring with them one of a pair of opposites and therefore cannot survive the presence of the other.

We may now substitute for the previous 'safe' answer a 'cleverer' one. Asked what makes something hot, we shall say, not 'heat' but 'fire'. On these lines, we say that what makes a body alive is not life, but *soul*. Whatever soul enters, it brings life with it, and cannot therefore entertain its opposite, death. Now we said that anything which is approached by an opposite which it cannot admit must *either* retreat *or* perish; but what will not admit death will not admit destruction, so only one alternative is left. Soul is both deathless and indestructible. At the approach of death, the mortal part dies, but the immortal part withdraws safe and sound to the other world.

C. is satisfied. Sim. can find no fault with the argument, but confesses that the greatness of the subject and his consciousness of human weakness compel him to retain some inward doubt. S. commends his attitude and advises further study of their premises. To analyse these adequately will be the best way to pursue the argument and complete the search.

*The myth.* The soul being immortal, we must cherish it with a view not only to this life but to all time. They say that the dead are taken

<sup>1</sup> For this as a military metaphor, and its effect on the argument, see Hackforth 155 f.



to a place of judgement and then to Hades where, suffering the appropriate fate, after many long circuits of time they are brought back here. The way to Hades is complicated, and there are guides whom sensible souls follow, but those corrupted by the body have to be dragged from its neighbourhood by force. The good have gods for their guides, and each goes to his appropriate place.

These places are in different regions of the earth, whose nature is not as generally supposed. It is a sphere<sup>1</sup> at rest without support in the centre of the heavens,<sup>2</sup> and of vast size, containing many inhabited hollows in which water and air have collected, of which the Mediterranean region is one. We never see its real surface, but in that respect are like creatures living in the sea and looking up through it, imagining it to be the sky. On its true surface the earth has brighter colours, fairer trees, flowers, stones and minerals, for ours are rotted by the impurities of the air as brine corrodes things in the sea. Men live up there, breathing *aither* as we do air, longer-lived, disease-free, and superior in senses and mind, in direct communication with the gods, who personally inhabit the temples built for them.

The hollows are connected by subterranean channels, full of water cold and hot, mud, lava or fire<sup>3</sup> according to the sort of earth through which they flow. One chasm, Tartarus, is bored right through the earth, and all the liquids flow out of and into this, where, having no bottom to rest on, they continually surge up and down, accompanied by violent winds. Going in one direction they withdraw from our hemisphere to the one called lower,<sup>4</sup> and vice versa, in each case

<sup>1</sup> This meaning for περιφερής was unchallenged until recently. Against it see Rosenmeyer, *CQ* 1956, and Morrison, *Phron.* 1959 (using different arguments). R. was answered by Calder in *Phron.* 1958 and replied briefly, *ib.* 1959. On the earth see also Frank, *P. u. sog. P.* 184ff., Heath, *Aristarchus* 144–8, and for date of discovery of its sphericity, vol. 1, 293–5. P. himself has mentioned the question whether the earth is round or flat at 97d, but unfortunately uses a different adj. (στρογγύλη, which itself could mean circular or spherical according to context).

<sup>2</sup> See vol. 1, 98. This does not of itself necessitate its sphericity.

<sup>3</sup> Here P. compares the lava-streams of Sicily, reminding us of the story that his original object in visiting the West was to see Etna (p. 18 above).

<sup>4</sup> καλούμενον 112c, presumably because P. does not regard it as strictly correct to speak of 'above' and 'below' on a spherical body. Cf. *Tim.* 62c–d. Morrison (*Phron.* 1959, 113–15) tries to explain it in terms of a disc, and claims that the *Tim.* passage is irrelevant because it refers to the whole universe. This will hardly do. The argument there *applied* to the universe is the general one that the terms 'above' and 'below' are inappropriate to points on a sphere.

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creating seas, lakes, rivers and springs.<sup>1</sup> When they sink again below the ground, they rejoin Tartarus by more or less circuitous routes, always nearer the earth's centre than when they left it.

There are many of these streams, but four in particular: Oceanus, Acheron, Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus.<sup>2</sup> Oceanus is the largest and outermost. Acheron runs through desert places, then below the earth to the Acherusian lake, where many souls wait an allotted time before being reborn. Pyriphlegethon flows through a burning region and forms a great boiling lake, and after many circuits<sup>3</sup> beneath the earth falls back into Tartarus. Its lava streams bursting out account for volcanoes. Cocytus flows first into a fearsome, wild place called Stygian, forming the Stygian lake. Both it and Pyriphlegethon skirt the Acherusian lake, but do not enter it.

After standing trial, average souls go to the Acherusian lake to be punished and purified of their sins and rewarded for their merits. Incurable sinners are cast for ever into Tartarus. Evil but still curable souls spend a year there, then are cast up through Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus, and if as they pass by the lake they can obtain forgiveness from those there whom they have killed or wronged in life they may join them. Until that happens they are condemned to repeat the same round. The outstandingly righteous are set free to dwell on the true surface of the earth, and any souls among them which have been purified by philosophy attain an even fairer home, not to be easily or briefly described.

Without vouching for every detail, one may say, since the soul has been shown to be immortal, that something like this is the truth about its fate. To believe it is, at the lowest, a venture worth making, and must reassure anyone who has renounced the body and clothed the soul in its proper adornments, self-control, justice, courage,

<sup>1</sup> It is not clear to me why, on this explanation, our rivers, seas etc. do not periodically dry up. No commentator seems worried by this, not even Robin, though he confirms that it is 'ces sources, ces fleuves, ces lacs, ces mers que nous voyons' that are in question (Budé ed. lxxiii). P. may be thinking of seasonal changes, more obvious in a country where rivers, springs and lakes completely dry up in summer, but the cause of this seems too obvious, nor does it apply to the sea. Aristotle criticizes the passage as a serious piece of geophysics (*Meteor.* 355b33 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> All the names come from Homer. See *Od.* 10.511-14.

<sup>3</sup> 113b. Robin suggested (lxxvi) that these circuits are to account for the fact that (as the theory demands) it discharges only water into Tartarus - a kind of cooling system in fact.

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freedom and truth. And now (concludes S.) it is time for my bath. There follow the closing scenes and the drinking of the hemlock, which must be left to Plato.

### *Comment*

*Plato and the mysteries.* The *Gorgias* described the life and ideals of the practical politician, to make it clear that a philosopher could have nothing to do with them. The *Phaedo* gives the other side of the picture, not the life which the philosopher refuses, but that which he embraces. The contrast is as absolute as before. In no other dialogue are asceticism and contempt for the body so forcibly and uncompromisingly upheld. The philosopher's whole life is training for death, he despises the body and all its works. It is a mere impediment to the mind, which must be taught to withdraw into itself in freedom and purity. When it relies on the senses it is lost, confused and dizzy, dragged into contact with the ever-mutable.<sup>1</sup> Only by itself can it reach the pure, the everlasting, immortal and changeless to which it is akin. And so on. In all this Plato shows himself deeply influenced by the mystery-religions with their *teletai*,<sup>2</sup> and especially the Orphic writings and precepts, which he appropriated to philosophy. The influence is acknowledged at 69c-d:

It looks as if those also who established *teletai* were no fools, but there is a hidden meaning in their teaching when it says that whoever arrives uninitiated in Hades will lie in mud, but the purified and initiated will live with gods. For there are indeed, as those conversant with the *teletai* say, 'many who bear the wand, but few Bacchi'.<sup>3</sup> But these in my belief are none other than those who have pursued philosophy in the right way.

He has just called wisdom (φρόνησις) a *katharmos*, a purificatory rite, or the authority for it,<sup>4</sup> and the words for pure, purity and purification

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting that besides inhibiting knowledge, subservience to the body is also condemned as the cause of war (66c). Wars are fought for wealth, which we only need because of our slavish attention to the body.

<sup>2</sup> Usually translated 'initiations', but a repeatable, not once-for-all, ritual. There is no English equivalent. For the meaning see Guthrie, *OGR* 201 f.

<sup>3</sup> This is a hexameter line with one change in word-order. Amid the throng of Bacchus's thyrsus-bearing followers, not all attained the holy ecstasy in which, being filled with the god's spirit, they could call themselves by his name. Βάκχος ἐκλήθην ὀσιωθεῖς says the μύστης in Euripides's *Cretans* (fr. 472 N.), and his 'sanctification' has involved ritual purity of life as well as participation in the acts of worship. For the specifically Orphic associations of the line see Guthrie, *G. and G.* 312.

<sup>4</sup> For the meaning of *katharmos* see vol. II, 244f.

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are reiterated throughout. The lying in mud is an Orphic feature. So is the notion of the body as the prison of the soul, said here (62b) to be the explanation (*logos*) given in the mysteries (ἐν ἀπορρήτοις). In the myth, besides Homeric features we find the forks and diversions on the road to Hades and verbal parallels with an Orphic poem in the description of Tartarus. The doctrine of reincarnation is attributed to 'an ancient *logos*', as in the *Meno* (81a) it comes from priests who 'render a *logos*' for their actions.<sup>1</sup>

Plato, then, quietly transfers to philosophers the benefits which the mysteries promised to their initiated, but this does not mean that he treated them with irony or disdain. Here and elsewhere his writing is saturated with their language of purity, sanctity and initiation, and his conception of the philosopher is coloured by theirs of the initiate. They must be accepted as a major influence on his thought, especially the Orphics, whose hostility to the body was so pronounced. If I may quote myself,<sup>2</sup>

Some of the finest parts of the dialogues give the impression not that he despised the body, but that, although the soul was the higher principle and must maintain the lead, soul and body could work in harmony together. Yet this unnatural dualism of the Orphics, which divides the two so sharply and makes the body nothing but an encumbrance, the source of evil, from which the soul must long to be purified, permeates the *Phaedo*... I would go so far as to name the Orphics as at least one of the influences which went to form the most characteristic part of Platonism, the sharp separation of the lower world of *sensa* from the heavenly world of the Ideas. It is often puzzling to see how this doctrine, which in itself leads naturally to a lack of interest in the sensible world and a concentration on the higher, seems to be at war with Plato's inborn longing to interfere effectively in practical matters. I believe in fact that it was the teaching of the *hieroi logoi* that set the feet of the philosopher on the upward path from

<sup>1</sup> For the mud cf. *Rep.* 363d and Guthrie, *OGR* 160, 194. For the body as prison see *Crat.* 400c (*OGR* 156, *G. and G.* 311 n. 3). The forked road to Hades is also mentioned at *Gorg.* 524a, *Rep.* 614c. For its recurrence in the instructions buried with a dead initiate see *OGR* 176; for Tartarus and *Orph. fr.* 66 Kern, *OGR* 168f., and for reincarnation as Orphic *ib.* 164ff. In *OGR* I tried to show that all these tenets were represented in the Orphic literature and precepts, but at present the important point is that P. was profoundly impressed by the mystery-religions with their common promise that 'there is something for the dead, and as has been said from of old, something much better for the good than for the bad' (63c). How much he owed to Eleusis or the Orphics or his Pythagorean friends is of minor interest.

<sup>2</sup> *OGR* 157. On P.'s relation to Orphism see also 238-44.

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the Cave into the Sunlight, whereas it was the voice of Plato's own heart that sternly bade him return and help his fellow-prisoners still fettered in the darkness of the cave.

The question how far Socrates himself believed in the immortality which he is here made to preach with such fervour belongs to the previous volume. (See pp. 476–84.) But we may remind ourselves of the remarkable coincidences of language with the *Apology* noted on p. 482, extending even to an admission of the possibility that immortality might be a delusion (*Phaedo* 91b). He does not believe it, nor, in my opinion, did the Socrates of the *Apology*.<sup>1</sup>

*The Forms introduced.* In the course of maintaining that the philosopher's aim is the release of soul from body in this life, we have the first mention of the Forms, in the words (65d): 'Do we assert or not that there is a "just itself", and a beautiful and a good?' Simmias agrees at once, as also when S. describes them as invisible and altogether imperceptible by the senses. This applies, he continues, to 'size, health, strength, and in a word the *being* of everything – what it really is'. To come nearest to the truth about it we must be ready to use pure reason and that alone. The question of the scope and content of the world of Forms will come up later. Here the language is vague, but the examples suggest that they are *qualities* existing each in isolation from any others. Their existence apart from their manifestations in particulars is brought home by the fact that, if asked whether size or health could be detected by the senses, we should probably answer 'yes' as definitely as Simmias agrees to the contrary. We notice also that their range is now extended beyond the moral and aesthetic spheres.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The description of death at 64c as 'separation of soul from body' (which also occurred at *Gorg.* 524b) may represent a common view as Hackforth says (p. 44 n. 1). It could apply even to the Homeric soul which vanished like smoke or 'made off with a shriek'. But needless to say, this was not what S. and P. meant by immortality.

<sup>2</sup> On 74a9–b1 ('We say that there is such a thing as the equal itself', parallel to justice, beauty and goodness themselves at 65d), and what follows, Ackrill (*Exegesis* 191f.) sees a difficulty, because 'it is important to know whether "we" and "you" refer to people in general or to believers in the Forms'. His sorting out of the passage is helpful, but although the speakers do believe in Forms, it is scarcely a fair question to put to P. because of the gradual development of his theory from what people in general do believe, and the consequent coincidence of terminology between the two. I have pointed out before (pp. 115, 223 with nn.) that most

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*Popular or political virtue.* At 69a–c comes the passage about the popular conception of virtue which I quoted earlier (p. 234) to point the contrast between conventional morality, accepted by the Sophists, and Socratic. Here it is characterized as being ‘brave through cowardice and temperate through profligacy’ (68d–e). It is not wickedness and does not lead to a bad life. Later it is described as ‘the popular and political virtue which they call<sup>1</sup> justice and self-control acquired by habit and training without the philosophic mind’,<sup>2</sup> and in his fantasy<sup>3</sup> of the incarnations of those who, not being made perfect by philosophy, have to submit to further lives on earth, Socrates sees its upholders as more fortunate than the rest: ‘they will be born into a social and harmless species, bees or wasps or ants perhaps, and later rejoin the human race as men of moderation’ (82a–b). It is the virtue of those whom Callicles despised. He and his like will for their stupidity and lusts be reincarnated as asses, while the tyrants whom they admire and envy will enter the bodies of wolves or scavenging birds.

*The argument from alternation* (70c ff., often referred to by its Greek term *antapodosis*), that ‘our souls exist elsewhere, and come back here again and are born from the dead’, would, if unmodified, be an unsatisfactory one for Socrates, for whom immortality meant escape from the body, not an endless repetition of incarceration in it. But later on he carries further the lesson of the mystery-religions. The soul of the philosopher, ‘as is said of the initiated’ (81a), having been purified in this life, at death takes nothing of the body with it but departs at once ‘to the invisible, divine, immortal and wise’ and is released for all time from the cycle of birth, at rest from wandering

people would reply ‘yes’ to the question ‘Is there such a thing as justice?’ Similarly if asked (as one might be in a political or economic discussion) ‘Well, do you believe there *is* such a thing as equality?’, an ordinary non-philosophical man might well reply, ‘Of course I do: otherwise I couldn’t even say these two sticks are equal.’ P. took these apparently existential statements, whose implications had never been thought out by their users, and wanted to know, since they are obviously not meaningless, in what sense justice and equality can exist; and being P. he concluded that they must be metaphysical entities of the sort he describes here. A different philosopher in the same situation might have decided that the statements only show there is a correct, because accepted, use of the words in question.

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis seems the only way of rendering *ἥν δὲ καλοῦσιν*, the word ‘forsooth’ having gone out of use without leaving a substitute.

<sup>2</sup> Like the *σωφροσύνη* *ἀνευ νοῦ* of *Meno* 88b (p. 260 n. 1 above).

<sup>3</sup> The repeated *εἰκόσ* (81d 5 and 6, e2, 82a1 and 2, b5) may justify calling it so.

and trouble. Like the initiate on a tablet buried with him as passport to the gods below, he can claim, 'I have flown out of the circle of grief and sorrow'.<sup>1</sup> The scheme is elaborated in the *Phaedrus*, where permanent release is the reward of souls who have chosen the philosophic life three times in succession (249a, c; p. 404 below).<sup>2</sup>

*Equality and the equals.* As mentioned already in connexion with the *Meno* (pp. 253 f.), the doctrine of recollection depends on the existence of the Forms, here said for the first time to exist as each 'a different thing, apart from its instances' (74a-c). The example offered is Equality, which has caused much difficulty. It is, as usual, referred to indifferently as 'the equal itself' and 'equality', and it is contrasted with equal physical objects like sticks and stones because (a) it is always and from every point of view equal, though sticks called equal can from another viewpoint look unequal;<sup>3</sup> (b) it exhibits its own character to perfection, whereas sticks etc. always fall short of perfect equality.<sup>4</sup> So far so good, but equality is not a property of one thing but a relation between two or more.<sup>5</sup> Consequently Plato speaks not only of 'equality' and 'the equal itself' but a few lines later, still in contrast to equal sticks, of 'the equals themselves'. The problem is whether Plato is positing a third class of being besides Forms and

<sup>1</sup> For the Orphic connexions of the κύκλος γενέσεως and the means of release from it, see OGR 166. The quotation is from a gold tablet found in a grave at Thurii in S. Italy (Kern, *Orph. Fr.* p. 106, translated OGR 173).

<sup>2</sup> Friedländer (*Pl.* III, 45) objects to *antapodosis* that it suits relative notions like larger and smaller, better or worse, but not beautiful and ugly, just and unjust, which are absolutes. Apparently a smaller thing can become larger, but an ugly thing cannot become beautiful. (So much for the ugly duckling.) He seems to have confused particulars with Forms, and his reference to the anonymous objector's point at 103a-c proves the opposite of what he wants. Philosophers will be interested in the article on *antapodosis* ('Dying') by C. J. F. Williams in *Philosophy* 1969.

<sup>3</sup> Murphy (*Rep.* 111 n. 1) and Owen (*SPM* 306 n. 2) would take τῶ...τῶ as neuters governed by ἴσα 'equal to one thing but not to another'). There is also an alternative reading τότε μὲν...τότε δέ, for which see Tarrant, *JHS* 1957, Pt. 1, 125.

<sup>4</sup> Although P. says equal objects 'wish' to be like Equality itself but fall short and cannot be (εἶναι) as it is but are (ἕσθιν) inferior, Dorter would like to persuade us that he only meant they *appear* not to be perfectly equal (*Phron.* 1972, 204-7). I fear I cannot believe this, nor think it helpful to P.'s argument.

<sup>5</sup> It is true, as Owen says (*SPM* 306 n. 1), that ἴσον has a non-relational use, in fact several. I have not myself found it used to mean 'of middle size', but it can also mean fair, impartial, or level (of ground). But that is not how P. is using it at *Phaedo* 74aff., with his talk of sticks and stones.

sensible particulars, differing from the Form Equality in that there are more than one of them, and from equal sensibles in their absolute perfection. And in fact Aristotle credits him with just such a view (*Metaph.* 987b 14–18): ‘Besides the sensibles and the Forms he posits mathematical objects in between, differing from the sensibles in being eternal and unmoved, and from the Forms in that there are many alike, whereas the Form itself is in every case unique.’ Again at 997b 1 we read of ‘the Forms and the intermediates, with which they say the mathematical sciences are concerned’.<sup>1</sup> Geometers need to speak of identical triangles, of two circles intersecting and so forth, and they do not mean visible figures drawn or modelled (p. 251 above); nor when we say  $2 + 2 = 4$  do we mean that two cows are exactly equal to two other cows.<sup>2</sup> But the Form, ‘by which’ as he would say ‘all circles are circles’, and which can be called either ‘the circle itself’ or circularity, obviously cannot be more than one.

Backed by Aristotle’s evidence, it would seem natural to take ‘the equals themselves’ in this way, as intermediates, yet in fact their status has led to a discussion of ‘scarcely surveyable proportions’.<sup>3</sup> Cherniss wrote that the complete absence of the intermediate class from all the dialogues ‘has been positively proved over and over again’.<sup>4</sup> The alternative, originally proposed by Heindorf (d. 1816) and revived in recent times, is that in the particular case of equality, which is essentially a relation between two or more things, ‘when Plato asks “does the idea of equality seem equal or unequal?”’, the implied comparison compels him perforce to use the plural; not that he thinks there are more ideas of equality than one, but because to ask whether one thing is equal or unequal is sheer nonsense’.<sup>5</sup> When he says,

<sup>1</sup> These and other passages from Aristotle, as collected by Bonitz, are given in Adam, *Rep.* II, 160.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. p. 523 n. 1 below.

<sup>3</sup> ‘zu einer kaum mehr übersehbaren Diskussion’, Mittelstrass, *Mögl. v. Wiss.* 428f. And that was in 1965.

<sup>4</sup> *Riddle* 76. He refers to two of the briefer and more dogmatic treatments (Shorey, *Unity* 83–5 and R. Robinson, *PED* 2f., 192, 197), and counts the long and well-reasoned argument of Hardie (*Study* ch. vi), who deals fully and carefully with his opponents, among the ‘failures’. (These scholars are dealing with the question as it arises in *Rep.*, not the present passage.)

<sup>5</sup> Archer-Hind *ad loc.*, expanding Heindorf whom he quotes verbatim. This is at least as clear as the later statements of Crombie (*EPD* 302f.) and Wedberg (*PPM* 94–9). Geach puts it briefly in Allen’s *SPM* 270, and Owen supports the same conclusion by a different argument in *Ar. on Dial.* 114f. Vlastos’s solution (*SPM* 289, with additional n. on 291), that the pl. can be



'Have the equals themselves ever seemed to you unequal, or equality inequality?' (74c1), the last three words only give an explanatory repetition of the first part of the sentence.

The champions of an intermediate class are curiously half-hearted. The equals 'can only be mathematical objects', but at the same time it is 'very unlikely' that Plato had formulated a doctrine of mathematical objects as intermediate between Forms and sensibles! The equals themselves, 'since they exist in the plural, cannot be the Idea of equal', and in *Rep.* 'the logic of the simile' requires the existence of intermediates, yet in these passages P. is 'on the verge of' recognizing them, but never does.<sup>1</sup> This seems too much like having it both ways. The strongest argument for the identity of 'the equals themselves' with the Form equality is given by Vlastos (*SPM* 288): From the premise that *the equals themselves* never appear unequal and equal sensible objects sometimes do, Plato infers that the sensible equals are not the same as *the equal itself*. He must, therefore, have been thinking of 'the equals' and 'the equal' as no more than variant expressions for the same thing. It is not indeed entirely conclusive. Sensibles, we know (74d), are trying but failing to reach the perfection of the Form.<sup>2</sup> If there exist also perfect instances of a Form, to emulate their perfection would be at the same time to emulate the Form. Nor must one ignore this peculiarity of *mathematica*, that there is an indefinite plurality of intelligible instances (say circles) of each Form (the Circle itself). This is not true of 'hard' or 'beautiful'. There are Forms of these, but no perfect instances which do not at the same time partake of the opposite.<sup>3</sup> After studying opposing views I do not think the question can be finally settled, and possibly Plato himself could not answer it when he wrote. If one had to choose, then, taking

used *generally* in such cases, e.g. that τὰ δίκαια = τὸ δίκαιον = δικαιοσύνη, is not supported by the examples he cites. Thus *Rep.* 520c5-6 obviously means 'we have seen the truth about just and unjust acts', namely that they are imperfect embodiments of the Form. (Bluck saw this, *Phron.* 1957, 118 n. 1.)

<sup>1</sup> Hackforth, *Ph.* 69 n. 2 (and similarly Bluck, 67 n. 3), Ross, *Metaph.* 1, 167f., *PTI* 22, 25 (p. 60 hardly seems consistent with these). On Ross see Hardie's comments, *Study* 52. Most scholars refer to the apparently similar case of αὐτὰ τὰ ὅμοια at *Parm.* 129b.

<sup>2</sup> Gosling's article 'Similarity in *Phaedo* 73b ff.' (*Phron.* 1965) has not convinced me otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *H. Maj.* 289c (p. 179 above), *Rep.* 479a-b; and for the Pythagorean associations of these ideas p. 251. Bluck (*Phron.* 1957, 117) opposes Vlastos on different grounds.

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into account that equality is only being used here as an example of Forms in general (75 c-d), the balance is slightly in favour of concluding that in mentioning 'the equals themselves' Plato did not have here in mind any class of 'intermediates' between Forms and sensibles.<sup>1</sup> This does not of course settle the question whether they are to be found in the dialogues at all, for the dispute has concentrated even more on the simile of the divided line in the *Republic*.<sup>2</sup>

*Anamnesis and the senses.* The theory of knowledge as recollection has met us in the *Meno*, to which there is a pretty clear reference in the mention of 'good questioning' at 73a. The second argument for it is new,<sup>3</sup> namely that we obtain our knowledge of the Forms in this life through acquaintance with the sensible manifestations which resemble them, but that the resemblance is never complete. As the knowledge of the Form re-emerges into consciousness, we recognize the sensible object as an inferior copy of it, and one cannot say 'x is an inferior copy of y' unless one has had previous acquaintance with y (74 d-e). I do not find anywhere what Cornford called 'the statement that we make such judgements, implying acquaintance with perfect equality, as soon as we begin to use our senses', i.e. in infancy (*Princ. Sap.* 52). On the contrary, at 75 e Socrates says that we lost at birth what we had a hold of before it, and that *later*, by using our senses, we recover the knowledge which we once had, a process rightly called recollection. It is a process, and takes time (p. 257 above), and many men never complete it (*Rep.* 476 b ff.). This was Plato's consistent view,<sup>4</sup> to which in the *Timaeus* (43 c ff.) he added a semi-scientific

<sup>1</sup> See also the series of articles by Mills, Bluck, Haynes and Rist in *Phron.* 1957, 1959, 1964, and Tarrant in *JHS* 1957 (1). This is the conclusion (tentative) of Wedberg, *PPM* 98.

<sup>2</sup> P. 509 n. 2 below. A valuable contribution to the problem of equality in *Phaedo* is M. Brown's excellent article 'The Idea of Equality in the *Phaedo*' (*AGPh* 1972). He offers a convincing explanation in terms of contemporary mathematics, with special reference to Bryson's definition of equality (τὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ μείζονα καὶ ἐλάττωνα ἴσα ἔστι) and his attempt to square the circle by the method of exhaustion, constructing a series of polygons inside it and another series outside it. The polygons are always *approaching* equality with the circle, and 'equal' is defined by enclosing it within the two limits of the greater and the less.

<sup>3</sup> But not, I think, inconsistent with the other or internally, as Gulley claims (*CQ* 1954, 197 f.). In *Meno*, not only is it the sense-experience of seeing the diagrams that enables the boy to give the right answers; the questions could not even have been put without them. Nor does *Phaedo* imply 'that the senses are to be always trusted'. See Hackforth, *Ph.* 75 f.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Tht.* 186 b-c: 'Some things it is natural for both men and animals to perceive immediately

explanation in terms of the turbulent motions of a soul when newly confined in the body's flux.

The senses, then, so long as we are confined to bodies, guide our first steps in the direction of recovery of the Forms, provided that we have the philosophic intelligence to use them aright and, as we have been told already, discard them as soon as possible to let the mind act by itself. I do not, as some have done, see any culpable inconsistency here with the previous denigration of the body and its senses. The philosopher will 'as far as possible' (64e5) leave the body behind, he will 'as far as possible' (66a3) be rid of eyes and ears and seek truth with the mind alone, knowing that the senses are deceptive and that one can never see reality with the eyes; but knowing also that the soul cannot be completely purified from the body in this life,<sup>1</sup> he must start from the limitations of the incarnate. Children cannot be philosophers, philosophers are not born but made – by their own efforts. They are still at the opposite pole from the ordinary sensual man who indulges the body instead of controlling it, and whose senses delude him because he believes that what they present to him is real.

*The psyche simple, not complex.* At 78bff., as an argument that the soul will not be dispersed at death, Socrates asserts that what is composite is more likely to be dispersed than what is simple. It is not a very convincing argument, and in fact the words 'composite' and 'simple' are never used in the attempt to show that soul belongs to the invisible and immutable world. I draw attention to it here because the question whether the *psyche* for Plato is simple or composite will recur in other dialogues in which he appears to divide it into 'parts'. He may even have done so in the *Gorgias* (p. 300 above), and he certainly does in the *Republic*. This and the *Phaedrus*, *Timaeus* and *Laws* will come into question before we can decide whether he adhered to the same psychology all his life. Meanwhile we may make a mental note that in the *Phaedo* the *psyche* is simple

after birth: I mean cases where sensations reach the mind through the body. But reasoned reflection concerning their essence and use are achieved – when any do achieve them – with difficulty and after a long period of effort and education.'

<sup>1</sup> That is why it can only be truly judged after the death of judges and judged, *Gorg.* 523d.

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and elemental, synonymous with intelligence, and emotions and desires (66c), as well as sense-perception, are assigned to the body. This is well brought out at 94b, where the resistance of a thirsty man to the impulse to drink is given as an instance of soul opposing body, whereas at *Rep.* 439c it exemplifies one element of the soul opposing another.

*Soul and harmony* (85eff.). Simmias's objection that the soul might be a *harmonia* of the bodily parts, and therefore unable to survive the body's dissolution, and its relation to Pythagorean thought, have been discussed in vol. 1 (307–19).<sup>1</sup> By choosing for his analogy the *harmonia* of a lyre, i.e. inviting comparison not only with the formula or ratio uniting material elements but with a *melody* (and both senses of *harmonia* were well established), Simmias laid himself open to a reply of which Socrates does not avail himself. You might, he said, say that the *harmonia* is invisible, bodiless and divine, and so ought to outlast the composite, earthy body of the lyre (85e–86a). Indeed you might, for so it does, bodiless and imperceptible like the soul, and can be reincarnated many times in the human voice or pipes or another lyre. The analogy of a tune might well have been used by Socrates himself.

The ethical argument against Simmias, bringing in the extraordinary idea of a harmony within a harmony, has been analysed by Hackforth.<sup>2</sup> The fatal step is taken at 94a: every soul is as much soul as any other, i.e. if soul is a *harmonia* it admits of no disharmony, therefore every soul should be equally *good*, admitting no *evil*, which is untrue. Now Simmias was reproducing in substance a doctrine of Alcmaeon and the medical writers that soul (life) depends on a balance of the physical opposites (wet and dry, cold and hot etc.) in the body, and as Alcmaeon said, a disturbance of this causes disease – not vice. Simmias's argument depends on the same assumption.<sup>3</sup> Plato, pre-

<sup>1</sup> E. Frank attributed the doctrine to Democritus, but on this see J. Bernhardt, *P. et le Mat. Anc.* App. III, pp. 212–14.

<sup>2</sup> 92e–94b, Hackforth pp. 118–20. See also W. F. Hicken in *CQ* 1954.

<sup>3</sup> For Alcmaeon see vol. 1, 313. There are striking linguistic similarities. Both mention hot, cold, wet and dry, and cf. *Ph.* 86b–c κρᾶσιν...αὐτῶν τούτων...ἐπειδὴν...μετρίως κρᾶσῃ with Alc. fr. 4 (via Aëtius) τὴν δὲ ὕλην τὴν σύμμετρον τῶν ποιῶν κρᾶσιν.

sumably unconsciously, gains his point here and elsewhere<sup>1</sup> by an unargued identification of *psyche* as a quasi-mechanical animating power, that which (as he says in the *Phaedrus*) being self-moving imparts the power of motion to others, and soul as what it was to Socrates, the moral and rational personality.<sup>2</sup> Hardly more reassuring is the agreement at 92e–93a that a *harmonia* or any other compound cannot be otherwise qualified, or behave otherwise, than the elements of which it is composed, and that therefore, since soul or mind shows a certain independence of the body, it is not the outcome of the composition of bodily parts. There are many compounds in the physical world which, according to the proportion in which their components are mingled, produce effects impossible to the components either separate or differently combined.

*The objection of Cebes: the need for teleological explanation.* The objection of Cebes is twice recapitulated by Socrates after his own statement to make sure that it is thoroughly understood (86e–88b, 91d, 95b–d), and it leads to the climax of the whole dialectical part of the dialogue, involving as it is said to do ‘a general investigation of the cause of coming into being and perishing’ (95e). It moves Socrates first to give an intellectual autobiography, describing his own pilgrimage in search of true causes.<sup>3</sup> Disillusioned by the natural philosophers,<sup>4</sup> even Anaxagoras, because they only told him *how* things happened, not *why*, he turned away from nature to seek the truth in *logoi*. As he makes plain by examples, the only explanation that will satisfy him is a teleological one, and perhaps his most striking hypothesis (though never acknowledged as such) is that everything comes into being for a purpose, and aims at attaining an absolute good which is an actually existing model.

The autobiography refers once again to the relation between knowledge and opinion (96b). One of the empiricists’ problems rejected by

<sup>1</sup> Notably in the argument for immortality from the ‘congenital evil’ of each thing, *Rep.* 608eff. (See pp. 554f. below.) Yet the distinction between ‘evil of the body’ as disease and evil of the *ψυχή* as wickedness occurs at *Gorg.* 477b.

<sup>2</sup> See on this Crombie, *EPD* 1, 316–18.

<sup>3</sup> The question of its historical veracity is discussed in vol. III, 421–5.

<sup>4</sup> The authors of the various scientific theories mentioned are mostly identifiable, and may be easily found in the commentaries of Archer-Hind, Burnet or Bluck.

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Socrates was whether knowledge arises from sense-perception, through the intermediate stages of memory and belief, when belief has become stable. It sounds like the teaching of the *Meno* (97e–98a, p. 240), but there what ‘secured’ the memories was an understanding of the ‘reason why’, equated with recollection of the Forms and their causal function. Unless we use the senses simply as pointers to the Forms, our opinions remain unconfirmed opinions, not knowledge. (Cf. *Phil.* 38b.) Since Aristotle abandoned the Platonic Forms, it is not surprising to find his account of the origins of knowledge much the same as that rejected here. (See *An. Post.* 100a3–8, and *Metaph.* A ch. 1.)

*Cause and aitia.* The whole section being about causation, it is important to understand the meaning of the noun *aitia* with its adjective *aitios*.<sup>1</sup> We translate it ‘cause’, but its scope was wider. Very commonly it meant a man who was guilty of, or to blame for, a misdeed, and in general whatever was in any sense *responsible* for the existence of a thing or the performance of an action. Aristotle analysed the concept into four (using also the neuter *aition*), all of which are necessary if anything is to come to be (as opposed to *being* eternally). First, there is ‘that out of which’ it comes to be, its matter: there cannot be a statue without bronze, clay or marble. Secondly, the agent: we need a sculptor. Thirdly, the form or pattern, which departs most from our notion of a ‘cause’. The sculptor has a model, either a sitter or other external object, or at least an image in his mind of what he wants to produce. And the model precedes the creation. In nature (which is what Aristotle is interested in) an adult man must exist to beget a baby: the hen comes before the egg.<sup>2</sup> Fourthly there is the ‘final cause’, or end in view. Creation is not motiveless. There may be plenty of wood, and a carpenter with the idea of a table in

<sup>1</sup> See also Vlastos, *Pl.* 1, 134–7, whom however I do not follow completely. For instance, I think it a considerable exaggeration to say that ‘the mere fact that Plato speaks of the Forms as *aitiai* in our passage is not of itself the slightest evidence – not even *prima facie* evidence – that he wants them to be causes’.

<sup>2</sup> *Metaph.* 1049b19–27 etc. Actuality is temporally as well as logically prior to potentiality universally speaking though not in the individual. Since Aristotle believed that the world had always existed, and there was no evolution of species, the hen-and-egg riddle did not worry him.

his head, but unless he wants one, either for his own use or to sell, it will not come into being. Thus there are four types of causation: material, efficient, formal and final. (For Aristotle, like Plato a teleologist, the final cause existed in nature no less than in art.) The same thing may be cause or effect according to the type that we have in mind. If a man takes walks on doctor's orders, his walking is the cause (efficient) of the health which results; but equally the health that he hopes to get is the cause (final) of his walking. We might more naturally say the 'reason for it', but cannot deny that an end-in-view is a cause of action.<sup>1</sup>

*Forms as causes.* Plato was aware that his predecessors had championed this or that aspect of causation, but lacking Aristotle's passion for classification he simply accepted some as 'real' *aitia* and dismissed the others as merely 'that without which the cause could not be the cause'. Socrates could not sit on his prison bed *without* bones and sinews, but they were not the *cause* of his sitting there (99b).<sup>2</sup> The natural philosophers (that is, in particular, the Milesians) had in Aristotle's view been satisfied with the material cause alone. Though it was probably unfair to accuse them of neglecting the efficient (vol. 1, 63f.), they were certainly uninterested in any formal or final cause. Even Anaxagoras used 'Mind' as efficient cause only (vol. 11, 274f.). A genuine cause must for Socrates be a 'final' one, the *telos* or end in view, and Plato represents him as finding this in the Forms, which combine formal and final in one. In his own case, the cause (motive) of his submission to his sentence was of course his emulation of τὸ δίκαιον, Justice. (Cf. *Crito* 48c-49a.) With his usual gentle irony he describes his procedure as a 'second-best course',<sup>3</sup> a phrase

<sup>1</sup> To Vlastos's objection (*l.c.* 135) that a non-existent thing (an ailing man's health) cannot cause anything, both P. and Aristotle would reply that *health* exists, and whether it is or is not in this particular man does not affect its power to cause his movements. It is not simply an unrealized ideal. Cf. *Ar. Metaph.* 1032b 11-14.

<sup>2</sup> This distinction between necessary conditions and causes has had to be made all over again by the moderns. So in the extracts from Benn and Peters and Broad in Edwards and Pap, *Mod. Introd.*<sup>1</sup> 96f., 208. They do not however mention teleology, and would be even less likely to see it in non-human nature.

<sup>3</sup> The exact meaning of the phrase δεύτερος πλοῦς is doubtful. According to Menander (fr. 241 Koch) it meant taking to the oars when the wind failed, a slower and more laborious way of reaching the goal. Alternatively it could mean missing the goal and being content with

which Plato would never let him apply seriously to the doctrine of Forms. This is made plain when he objects to his own analogy between *logoi* and reflections that one who studies reality through mental processes sees it no less directly than the empirical observer. That Forms are formal causes, responsible for the character of a generated thing, is inherent in their name and endlessly reiterated in the dialogues; and that they are final causes or ends in view, the perfect Being towards which all becoming is struggling but ever falling short of it, has been shown at 74d-e.<sup>1</sup>

Plato's Socrates extended his speculations into mathematics. When 8 become 10, is it *because* (διὰ τὸ) 2 are added to them? Is an object 2 feet long longer than one of a foot *because* it exceeds it by half its own length? Is the cause of 1 becoming 2 the fact that it *approaches* another? Here we are far from anything which *we* should call a cause, and Vlastos (*l.c.* 131, using an example that is not Plato's) protests vigorously against the use of 'cause' in translations. But *aitia* does still mean what is responsible for a situation, and Plato is thinking of the days, not far back, when mathematics was a mystery and thoughtful minds still had difficulty in separating mathematical number from physical objects.<sup>2</sup> At this stage it did not seem absurd to ask, if one cow in a field was joined by another, what had made one become

a second-best, and this is what it seems to mean elsewhere in P. and Aristotle (Plato, *Pol.* 300c, *Phil.* 19c; Ar. *EN* 1109a34, *Pol.* 1284b19). I incline to the first interpretation (with Matthews, *P.'s E.* 59f.). The question becomes unimportant if one believes, as I do, that the phrase is used ironically here, but this has led to much discussion. See for a start Goodrich in *CR* 1903 and 1904, Murphy in *CQ* 1936, Bluck, *Ph.*, suppl. nn. 11 and 16 and reff. there. Among those who claim that 'second-best' is not ironical are Murphy (p. 42), Archer-Hind (*Ph.*, App. 11), Ritter (*Essence* 370), Ross (*PTI* 234f.), Cherniss (*ACPA* 451 n. 395), Hackforth (*Ph.* 137, 146). Some of them rely on 99c8-9, which however, as I read it, plainly means that S. was denied the teleological cause *so long as he followed the methods of the natural philosophers and Anaxagoras*. The verbs are in the aorist tense, but scholars continue to translate (as Vlastos in *Pl.* 1, 138 n. 15) 'I have been denied...and have failed' (as if ἐστέρημαι...ολός τέ εἰμι). Burnet (*ad loc.*) was one who held that 'S. does not believe for a moment that the method he is about to describe is a *pis aller*'. I agree.

<sup>1</sup> That the Forms in Plato's eyes should not provide a teleological cause, as recently Vlastos (*Pl.* 1, 138 n. 15, 141f.) and Burge (*Phron.* 1971, 1 n. 2) have written, is impossible. Cf. also the arguments of Crombie, *EPD* 11, 165-9. Rose in *Monist* 1966 speaks of them as formal but not final causes as if P. already had the systematic Aristotelian analysis in mind. In any case Aristotle himself taught that in natural generation the formal and final causes coalesce (see vol. 1, 236): his main criticism of the Forms was that they lacked the efficient element (*Metaph.* 991a8-11).

<sup>2</sup> For this characteristic of early Pythagoreanism see vol. 1, 212f., 225f., 229-38; and on the confusion of physical with logical *aitiai*, Vlastos, *Pl.* 1, 152-6.



two. Nothing new had come into existence, in fact it is because they have come into proximity that we now call them two. Many besides Socrates must have wondered about it. 'I marvel that when they were apart, each was one, and they were not then two, but when they approached each other this, their coming together, was responsible (*aitia*) for their becoming two' (97a). He is going to advance beyond this somewhat simple-minded view.

*From physical objects to logoi.* What he did was in line with the admonition of Parmenides to leave sight, hearing and the other senses behind and 'judge by *logos*', *reason*.<sup>1</sup> His method was to 'lay down' (100a3, b5) as premise what seemed the most unquestionable general truth, and see what followed from it, and the chosen premise was the existence of the Forms and their causal function as that 'by which' sensible objects acquire their characters.<sup>2</sup> Of this he is convinced, though he is not prepared to assert their mode of operation, whether it should be described as presence, association or what.<sup>3</sup> Since he is among friends who fully accept this premise (65d), there is no need for him to carry out the tests which for the sake of completeness, he also describes (101d3-102a2).<sup>4</sup> The simplest description of this

<sup>1</sup> Parm. fr. 7.4f. This is the best clue to the meaning of the word at 99e5, contrasted as it is with observation of natural phenomena. Since we cannot use 'reasons' in the same sense, Plato's use of the pl. has led to a variety of translations: 'propositions' (Hackforth, Sayre), 'definitions' (Bluck), either of these or 'judgements' (Burnet), 'accounts, definitions or concepts' (Crombie). *Not* definitions or arguments, but statements or propositions (Ross, *PTI* 27). 'Theories' as opposed to 'facts' (Murphy, Rose, Tredennick) comes near it. Best 'the domain of reason' (Jowett). That the same word is used a little later in another of its many senses would not have troubled a Greek and should not trouble us. (Archer-Hind thought the meaning could only be understood after study of *Rep.* 506-18.)

<sup>2</sup> 100d τῷ καλῷ πάντα τὰ καλὰ καλὰ. So already in *H. Maj.* 287c ἄρ' οὐν οὐ καὶ τὰ καλὰ πάντα τῷ καλῷ ἐστὶ καλὰ; showing the continuity between Socratic and Platonic thought. On the dative see pp. 118f. above.

<sup>3</sup> At *Metaph.* 991b3 and *GC* 335b9 Aristotle explicitly refers to this passage in criticizing P. for neglecting the efficient cause, and like Plato here, he ascribes the theory of Forms to ἡ ἐν τοῖς λόγοις σκέψις (987b31).

<sup>4</sup> Modern writing on the 'hypothetical method' in *Phaedo* is extensive. As an introduction see the following: Robinson, *PED* ch. ix, Hackforth, *Ph.* 136-46, Bluck, *Phron.* 1957, Huby, *Phron.* 1959, Sayre, *PAM* 3-40, Matthews, *P.'s E.* 29-33. It is difficult to decide between interpretations, but I found Hackforth's account lucid and his comparison with *Meno* (more briefly made by others) helpful. Huby makes a valuable contribution when she connects it with Simmias's earlier recommendation (85c-d) to 'learn or discover how things are, or if that is impossible [as S. said that by the methods of the natural philosophers he could neither discover causes nor learn them from another, 99c-d] choose the best and most indisputable of human

'hypothetical method' is that it is deductive: what 'Socrates' renounced was empirical inductive methods. But inductive argument is precisely what Aristotle attributed to the real Socrates. Is Plato going against him here? In emphasis perhaps, but (a) in the dialogues which there is good reason to call Socratic, though we are given lessons in extracting a universal from a number of particular instances (or rather a genus from particular species), it is assumed that the general form exists, and is that *by which* the particular instances are what they are: we seek to define it, not to prove that it is there; (b) induction and deduction are not mutually exclusive, but two halves of a single process. The initial premise is not chosen at random, but because one believes it well grounded, and whence can the grounds come if not from experience, whether or not an inductive argument is expressly and formally set out? Socrates's own inductions were of an elementary sort perhaps better described as arguments from analogy,<sup>1</sup> and the upward process from particulars to Forms is fully set out in the *Symposium* (p. 377 below). Plato's emphasis on deduction may, as Burnet suggested (on 100a3), be connected with his interest in geometry and extension of its methods beyond the mathematical sphere.<sup>2</sup>

*Immanent Forms.* At 102d we are told that besides the transcendent Form ('tallness itself'), there is 'the tallness in us', which like its external counterpart can never be anything but tall (102d-e), though tall individuals can also be short<sup>3</sup> (these being relative terms), through admitting the contrary Form. Are these immanent Forms a separate ontological class, or simply the familiar Forms entering into particulars? Even if there are difficulties in both views, one can hardly doubt that the latter is correct.<sup>4</sup> Ever since the *Lysis* (217d, p. 151), the *presence logoi*, cling to it like a raft and risk your whole life on it'. (But see also Patterson, *P. on I.*, 91-106.)

<sup>1</sup> On Socratic induction or analogy see vol. III, 425-30, especially the second quotation from Ross on p. 428.

<sup>2</sup> For this interest see pp. 251 f., 299 f. above.

<sup>3</sup> This point too, about an individual exhibiting contrary qualities, has been made in the Socratic dialogues and was probably Socratic. Cf. *H. Maj.* 289c, and see pp. 179 f. above.

<sup>4</sup> So D. O'Brien in *CQ* 1967, 201 f. He thinks 'immanent form' a confusing term, but it is difficult to give any other name to what P. himself calls τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν μέγεθος etc. At p. 201 n. 1 he gives a list of scholars who have regarded immanent forms as a distinct class.

of the Forms, and *possession* of them, has been necessary to account for the qualities of particulars. Hackforth distinguished them as separate entities, using a capital F for the external Forms and a small one for the immanent, yet he describes the immanent as 'characters which... can [*sic*] *approach* and reside in concrete subjects' (*Ph.* 150 n. 1). The italics are his, but if the forms can (apparently they need not!) *approach* the concrete subject, they must exist outside it. Bluck, who also distinguished the immanent qualities as *copies* (his italics) of Forms, raised a more serious objection to their identity by pointing out that Plato speaks of them as 'either withdrawing or perishing', and a Form cannot perish.<sup>1</sup> If this is an anomaly, the multiplication of entities (yet another class of 'intermediates'?) without further explanation would be stranger still. To speak of the 'presence or association' of the Form as giving a particular its quality (100d) may be vague, but would be completely meaningless unless we suppose that the Form itself is present in the thing. The duality 'Forms themselves' (or 'in nature' 103b5) and 'Forms in us' (or other concrete objects) acquires importance later in the argument, but does not recur in other dialogues.

*Parmenides* 130b (often cited as a parallel instance) simply draws the familiar distinction between Forms and particulars: 'the distinction you speak of', says Parmenides, 'that there are on the one hand Forms themselves and on the other the things that share in them'. The explanation that follows can only be an explanation of this *twofold* classification, and the 'likeness that we possess' corresponds to the approximate equality between the two apparently equal sticks, where no one has suspected a third ontological level. Here the 'tallness in us' is purely tall, admitting no admixture of its contrary, and so

<sup>1</sup> Bluck, *Ph.* 17f., 192. Verdenius (*Mnem.* 1958, 232f.), arguing against Hackforth and Bluck, does not meet this point. Vlastos also believes that Forms and immanent characters are 'ontologically distinct' (*Pl.* 1, 139-41). I myself think (against many commentators) that Plato, led on by his military metaphor, is including all the logical possibilities without intending us to suppose that a Form ever perishes. Moreover mention of both alternatives has the advantage that both apply in the case of a physical substance like snow, to be introduced later. Incidentally I must correct a false impression given by Vlastos when arguing on p. 142 that a Form need not be instantiated. To speak of the 'Form of the Ideal City' is, Platonically, nonsense. There is a Form of City, which *is* instantiated (imperfectly like every instantiation of a Form) in every city. As for the Form of a *chiliagon*, there is no reason to think that such a thing ever entered Plato's head.

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(one would think) in no way imperfect. Ross however supposed the immanent qualities to be themselves imperfect copies, and more recently Rist has written that the largeness in the particular is 'of an ontologically defective kind'. He adds later that 'Whiteness is the cause of white in white particulars; it is not itself the whiteness in those particulars.'<sup>1</sup> Yet the *Phaedo* says it is by its *presence* in particulars that the Form can act as a cause.

With the proviso that Plato himself may not yet be quite clear on this point, the nearest approximation to his thought at the present stage seems to be as follows. Whiteness is an Intelligible (not visible) Form.<sup>2</sup> When it enters a material object (say a face) its *combination with* body produces visible whiteness, an imperfect imitation of the transcendent Form in the only medium in which material objects can reflect it. The face, which was never perfectly white, may turn red by 'receiving' (*Phaedo* 102d-e) Redness instead of Whiteness, but Whiteness, whether 'by itself' or in us, will always be itself and nothing else.

Plato, it may be, has not clearly worked out in his own mind the implications of 'presence or association' of the Form with the particular. He criticizes the present position himself in the *Parmenides*, and it is right to remember that Socrates is now speaking on the last day of his life to an audience of sympathetic friends. His beliefs are not to be subjected to the rigorous examination of an Eleatic visitor or the father of the Eleatics himself. As Aristotle rightly saw,<sup>3</sup> the theory of Forms as employed in the *Phaedo* cannot be expressed without recourse to poetic metaphor. To speak of its 'methodological sterility for natural science' (Vlastos, *Pl.* I, 164) is inappropriate. Socrates is not trying to help scientists, but to strengthen his own and his companions' faith in the immortality of the soul. Yet Aristotle

<sup>1</sup> Ross, *PTI* 30, Rist, *Philol.* 1964, 221 and 223. Likewise Cornford says (*P. and P.* 78) that the tallness in a person 'is not exempt from all change'. This directly contradicts what S. says in the *Phaedo*. It is its possessor who is not exempt from change.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the contrast between a colour or shape and its οὐσία at *Crat.* 423d-e. A namegiver will not imitate their sensible appearance - that is the artist's job - but try to express this non-sensible essence. It is one of the things described in *Tht.* (186b) as grasped by the mind alone, not the senses.

<sup>3</sup> *Metaph.* 991a20. The military metaphor of the Forms 'advancing', 'holding their ground' or 'retreating' has often been remarked on, and one must sympathize with Tarrant when she speaks of 'the crudest spatial conceptions' which it brings in (*H. Maj.* lvii).

perhaps learned more from Plato than he liked to admit. There is here the germ of his doctrine of matter, form and the concrete (or compound, σύνθετον) object, with the qualification that he returned to the Socratic view of form as immanent only. It comes out particularly in reply to the anonymous questioner at 103a-c with its distinction between the opposites themselves and the things which possess them.<sup>1</sup> It is the opposites which cannot change into each other. So for Aristotle concrete things must consist of a *substratum* qualified at any given moment by one or other of two opposite forms or a state intermediate between them: 'Sensible substance undergoes change. Now if change is between opposites or intermediate states... there must be a substratum which changes to the opposite condition, for the opposites do not change. And this substratum remains, but the opposite does not. There is then a third factor besides the opposites, namely the matter.'<sup>2</sup> This third factor is his answer to the Parmenidean dilemma. Something *can* come to be from 'what is not' – not absolutely but *per accidens*, the 'accident' being lack of the form which it may acquire (*Metaph.* 1069b 18).

*Opposites and incompatibles.* The final step in the argument introduces further complexities, and I for one am not prepared to say precisely when Plato is speaking of Forms and when not, or even that he himself was clear on the point. Certainly his modern interpreters differ widely, and one of the most recent concludes that 'the more cautious policy would appear to be to reserve judgement concerning the exact ontological status of the different analogues of soul in the argument'.<sup>3</sup> That snow and fire, when spoken of at 103d as what cannot admit the opposite of the Form which they essentially possess, are the physical substances, seems certain;<sup>4</sup> and it seems equally certain that when summing up the lesson in general terms, Plato is

<sup>1</sup> Note that it is *the opposites themselves*, not copies of them, that are in things (103b4-6). One cannot suppose that *ἐκείνα αὐτά* and *αὐτὰ ἐκείνα* in b8 and c1 are anything but these.

<sup>2</sup> *Metaph.* 1069b3-9, cf. *GC* 329a24ff. Comparison of the Greek with Plato's is interesting, e.g. *ὑπομένει* with *ὑπομένον* at *Phaedo* 102e2.

<sup>3</sup> T. M. Robinson, *P.'s Psych.* 29. Cf. Burnet on 104d1: 'It is this uncertainty which creates all the difficulties of the present passage.'

<sup>4</sup> It is the obvious implication of 103e4-5 *ὁ ἔστι μὲν οὐκ ἐκείνο, ἔχει δὲ τὴν ἐκείνου μορφήν ἀεὶ ὅταν περ ᾗ*. Cf. *τὰ ἔχοντα τὰ ἐναντία* at 103b6. (*Contra* Keyt, *Phron.* 1963, 168 n. 2.)

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speaking of the Forms of such substances. In the language of Forms (101a1-5 as paraphrased by Ross, p. 32), if a Form [e.g. Snow] brings with it one of two contrary Forms [Cold or Heat] into everything into which it enters [in this case visible, tangible snow], it never receives the contrary of that Form. There is no inconsistency here,<sup>1</sup> and if Plato had gone straight from this analogy to the soul (also a substance with attributes, though not a physical one), things might have been easier. Unfortunately he thinks he will make his meaning clearer (103e5-6) by adding the example of numbers, in which 'the three' (n.pl.), 'the triad', and 'the Form of Three' all figure, causing confusion among his commentators.<sup>2</sup> In any case the lesson of the analogy is that, besides accidental attributes (Forms) like Simmias's shortness, there are essential ones – the coldness of snow, the heat of fire – which their possessors cannot lose without forfeiting their identity.<sup>3</sup> Snow, as snow, though not itself the contrary of heat will perish when heat is brought near it, unless it gets out of the way. Soul is by definition what gives life to a body. Life *always* accompanies it, is an essential attribute of it. Soul therefore cannot lose life, admit its opposite death, and still remain soul. It is essentially deathless, as snow is heatless and three, being essentially odd, 'evenless'. According to the analogy, on the approach of death it will either withdraw or perish. But the analogy is not complete, because whereas there is no reason why what is essentially without heat should not be destroyed, what is essentially deathless cannot, since to die is to be destroyed. The soul therefore, being deathless, is indestructible, and the qualification 'so long as it exists' (103e) is no longer applicable.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Commentators regularly put the question 'Is snow a Form?' Would it not be more Platonic to ask 'Is there a Form of snow?', as Parmenides asks at *Parm.* 130c2 whether there is αὐτό τι εἶδος . . . πρὸς ἣ καὶ ὕδατος?

<sup>2</sup> E.g. τὰ τρία means three objects according to T. M. Robinson (*P.'s Psych.* 28), as to Archer-Hind earlier, the character 'threeness' according to Hackforth (*Ph.* 156); and cf. Schiller, *Phron.* 1967, 57. Opinions and their authors are listed by D. O'Brien, *CQ* 1967, 219. On p. 221 he himself says that 'probably fire is now thought of to some extent as form'. What can 'to some extent' mean? On the whole argument of 102-6, note Crombie's discussion, *EPD* I, 318-23, II, 311-19.

<sup>3</sup> In logical language the one 'entails' the other; but for P. the problem was ontological rather than logical. This indeed is what creates the difficulties in his argument.

<sup>4</sup> The Peripatetic Strato, in an often-quoted passage (e.g. Hackforth, *Ph.* 163), argued that it did apply to soul: 'just as fire, so long as it exists, is uncooled (unfortunately ἀψυκτον is ambiguous as between uncooled and incapable of being cooled), so soul, so long as it exists, is

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The modern reader, who does not feel fully assured of his immortality by all this,<sup>1</sup> may be relieved to find that even this final argument from 'the general cause of generation and passing away' is regarded by Plato as to some extent provisional. Socrates approves Simmias's scepticism, and advises further scrutiny of the premises on which it is based. They will then have pursued the matter 'to the limit of human powers'. Simmias's own counsel was the best (85c-d), where certainty is impossible to accept the account which, humanly speaking, is least vulnerable, and trust oneself to it like a raft for the voyage of life.<sup>2</sup> The repeated phrase 'since the soul has been found to be immortal' (107c, 114d) need mean no more than that this is what Socrates is doing. What matters is the moral: 'make every effort, for the sake of what has been said, to live with virtue and wisdom; for the prize is worthy and our hope is great' (114c). It is summed up in the simple Socratic admonition to 'care for the *psyche*' (107c).

*Forms in the Phaedo.* Forms in themselves and their relation to particulars are in many respects the same as in the dialogues called Socratic. They exist and are unchanging, they are *in* things and are that *by* which the particulars are characterized (*Euthyphro*, pp. 115, 116, 118f. above) or which 'makes' them have it (*H. Maj.* 300a9), i.e. by their presence (*Lys.* 217d-e, p. 151 above, *H. Maj.* 294a and c) or association (*H. Maj.* 300a10). Things 'have' them (*Lys.* 217e, *H. Maj.* 300a9) or 'share in' them (*Gorg.* 467e), or they are 'added' to things (*H. Maj.* 292d). The word *paradeigma* is not used, but the Forms are patterns, not in the limited sense of a criterion of recognition, which they have in the *Euthyphro* (p. 118 above), but as

deathless'. I have never been able to see the force of this argument. Once someone has been made to grant, rightly or wrongly, that the soul is ἀθάνατος – immortal, not admitting death – he has granted that it must always exist. That is what the word means. It is a contradiction to say that fire, so long as it exists, can be cold, but we do not on that account call fire unquenchable. Is not Strato misled by the equivocacy of ἀψυκτον, which is not shared by ἀθάνατον? (On Strato's argument see also Erbse in *Phron.* 1969, 98ff.) P.'s argument has been summarized most clearly by Archer-Hind, *Phaedo* 116 (on 105d-106d).

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps he may go as far as Cicero (*Tusc.* 1.11.24): 'Somehow, while I read I am agreeing, but when I have put the book down and begin to think about the soul's immortality for myself, all that agreement ebbs away.'

<sup>2</sup> See on this Diès, *Autour de P.* 443. In spite of more confident statements the keynote of the dialogue is hope: ἐλπίζω, εἰκότως εὐελπίς εἶναι, πολλὰ ἐλπίς, ἐλπίς ἐστίν (*l.c.* for *reff.*). Bluck took a more positive view, *Ph.* 23 and App. ix with 189 n. 1.

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perfect models which particulars in this world endeavour, with incomplete success, to reproduce. Here is the fatal innovation which Aristotle and many since have found so objectionable. Not only are the Forms in things, imparting their character by their presence or association 'or whatever it may be'; they exist also separately and 'by themselves'.<sup>1</sup> Existence is divided into two categories, the visible-perishable contrasted with the invisible-eternal, also called divine (79a, 80a). Forms belong to the latter, grasped by the mind not the senses, eternal and changeless, simple and uniform, and it is only to their realm that the term 'being' properly belongs (78d).

On the extent of the world of Forms Plato is still vague, and we cannot tell whether he was ready to state, as he did in the *Republic*, that 'we are accustomed to postulate' a Form for every group of things called by the same name. (But cf. pp. 550f. below.) In the *Phaedo* Forms of sensible and moral qualities, relations and numbers – largeness, equality, life (106d), health, strength, justice, piety, and three – are clearly recognized, with the generalizing formulae 'everything on which we set the seal "reality itself"' (75 d) and 'the reality to which we refer everything that comes from the senses' (76d).<sup>2</sup> The latter certainly sounds like the doctrine of the *Republic*, but one cannot be sure. As Plato later realized, once one seriously tries to delimit the range, one is in difficulties. In the *Parmenides* (130b–c) Socrates doubts whether there are separate Forms of fire and water, and though I believe that the argument here assumes Forms as well as physical instances of snow and fire, this is not a problem to which Plato is yet giving attention. The important thing is that there should be a 'Form, all by itself, of beauty and goodness and all things like that' (*Parm. ib.*). The doctrine never lost the marks of its Socratic origin.

A Form, whether as manifested in particulars or in its independent

<sup>1</sup> Arist.'s statement that P. and his school 'separated' Forms from particulars (*Metaph.* 1078b31) has been challenged (most recently by Ebert in *Mein. u. Wiss.*), but is confirmed not only in *Phaedo*, *Phdr.* and *Symp. passim* but at *Parm.* 130b, where S. admits to believing that there are χωρὶς μὲν εἶδη αὐτὰ ἄττα χωρὶς δὲ τὰ τούτων αὐ μετέχοντα.

<sup>2</sup> See 65d, 74a, 75c–d, 76d, 100b, 104d5–6. Ross says (*PTI* 24) that 'Ideas of substances (like animal itself) are not mentioned in the *Phaedo*'. This assumes that there is no mention of Forms of snow and fire, though his quotation of 105a1–5 on p. 32 would seem to make this doubtful.



## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

existence, is itself qualified by the characteristic which it imparts (102d–e), a notion which we have met before.<sup>1</sup> Taken as they stand, Plato's words are certainly puzzling, especially when applied to relative epithets: told that 'Largeness is large', one is tempted to reply 'How large?', and it is difficult to conceive of *perfect* Largeness – until, perhaps, one remembers that it is not to be counted among sensible qualities at all, but among the invisible realities of the divine and changeless world. What is said about that world in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* may help us to understand how Plato thought of these, and the difficulties of 'self-predication' may be left until he himself becomes aware of them.

*Is soul a Form?*<sup>2</sup> Again a much discussed subject. Hackforth supposed Plato to have conceived it as an immanent Form for the purpose of this argument only, and reverted before the end of the dialogue to the conception of it as a subject possessing a Form. Keyt says 'Plato treats soul *as if* it were an immanent form. (We need not make the stronger statement that he takes the soul *to be* a form.)' Burnet had said earlier 'There is not a word about the soul being itself a form. . . not is such an assumption required', but did not support his statement with argument. I do not believe that Plato ever regarded soul, individually or collectively, as a Form. For one thing, the soul knows. Forms are known, they do not know.<sup>3</sup> Later, in the *Sophist*, he will argue (or so at least I interpret him) that intelligence, and therefore life and soul, must be a part of reality as well as the motionless Forms, and though his thoughts on the subject are as yet inchoate the *Phaedo* is not inconsistent with that. My summary tries to bring this out, and if arguments are wanted I think they have been supplied convincingly by J. Schiller.<sup>4</sup> We must be content with what Plato

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 119 and 223 above.

<sup>2</sup> Again the question is usually asked in this way – not, oddly enough, 'Is there a Form of soul?' Archer-Hind (*Ph.* 116), however, thought there must be, though it is 'a metaphysical monstrosity'. He does not say why, but presumably because soul itself belongs to the same eternal world as the Forms. Anyway, I am sure that Plato never believed in such a Form.

<sup>3</sup> A point suggested to me by reading M. Landmann, *Z. f. Phil. Forsch.* 1956, 13. To know is to resemble (Empedocles, and in Plato at *Rep.* 500c, p. 500 below, and *Tim.* 47c), which accords with the *psyche*'s 'kinship' with the Forms.

<sup>4</sup> See his article in *Phron.* 1967. Other reff. for this paragraph are: Hackforth, *Ph.* 162 and 165; Keyt, *Phron.* 1963, 169; Burnet, *Ph.* 123; Plato, *Soph.* 248e.

## *The Phaedo*

tells us: Forms are invisible, eternal, constant, divine. Soul too is invisible, and is most truly itself when it has left the body behind and through its own (intellectual) activity achieves contact with them. It therefore belongs also to the realm of true Being, it is 'like' the Forms and 'of their kin' (78c-80b).

*The myth.* Most editors give very little space to this splendid bit of imaginative writing, though Robin has a full account.<sup>1</sup> Combining traditional elements from Homer, the teachers of *teletai*, and popular belief, and Ionian and Pythagorean scientific theory, Plato has created a marvellous picture not only of the underworld but of the whole exterior and interior geography of the earth. The ingenious way in which he makes the rivers of the underworld appear also above ground<sup>2</sup> acknowledges the fact that some had an actual as well as a mythical existence. Acheron, its tributary Cocytus, and the Acherusian lake through which it flowed were in Epirus, Styx in Arcadia. Yet in the confusion of popular superstition Styx, which was a waterfall, played a second, mythical role as the river across which Charon ferried the souls of the dead. Only Oceanus and Pyriphlegethon<sup>3</sup> (the former being in general belief a river encircling the earth's disc) are wholly mythical, and even Pyriphlegethon is given a natural function in connexion with volcanic eruptions.

At 109b Plato introduces the heavenly element, breathed by the fortunate creatures living on the true surface of the earth, as 'what is commonly called *aither*'. This is on the one hand linked with widespread beliefs about *aither* as both a divine substance and the substance of the human soul, which rejoins it at death; and on the other with what became the scientific doctrine of a fifth element, probably adopted by Plato in his later years, and firmly established by Aristotle.<sup>4</sup> Commentators are on slippery ground when they ask

<sup>1</sup> For this reason I have summarized it fairly fully with some notes. Even Frutiger, writing a book on P.'s myths, had no interest in its content. But Robin may be strongly recommended.

<sup>2</sup> Robin lxxv: 'Il n'y a aucun fleuve qui soit entièrement intérieur ou extérieur.' Hackforth distorted the description of Acheron at 112e8-113a1 by ignoring the words ἑλλων καὶ δὴ καί. It 'flows through desert places and also beneath the earth'.

<sup>3</sup> 'Blazing with fire.' Milton (*PL* 11, 577-81) is accurate on the meanings of the names.

<sup>4</sup> For evidence of current beliefs about *aither* see vol. 1, 466 with n. 2, 470f., 480, and for a fifth element in P., 270-3.

their favourite question: Is the myth intended as fantasy or fact? First, it is not all of a piece, and secondly, in Plato's time no firm line could be drawn between myth (or religious belief) and what was taken for scientific fact. We must not take it for poetic fantasy, wrote Robin: 'c'est au contraire une tentative très sérieuse pour donner d'un problème physique une solution autre que celle des cosmologies naturalistes et pour dépasser d'autre part les travaux de la géographie purement descriptive'; but his countryman Frutiger a few years later: 'Il est à peine croyable que le caractère mythique de ce passage puisse être contesté.'

One may at least say that Plato carried the details far beyond the needs of his eschatological lesson. The violent winds of 112b, the routes of the rivers and the points in Tartarus of their exits and re-entrances, have no bearing on the fate of the souls.<sup>1</sup> For that the points repeated from the *Gorgias* would have sufficed: judgement after death, the crossroads, and different fates for the curable, the incurable and good men or philosophers. Moreover Aristotle criticized Plato's account of rivers and seas as a serious scientific theory (*Meteor.* 355b33ff.). One can, with Frutiger, dismiss him as insensitive and superficial, but one need not.<sup>2</sup> Friedländer (*Pl.* 1, 273) sees it, in so far as it is serious, as an attempt to adapt the Ionian conception of the earth as a concave-surfaced disc (vol. 1, 294) to the more recent hypothesis that it is spherical.<sup>3</sup> It is nothing against this that Plato has used the idea that we live in a hollow to point the purely Platonic contrast between our dim and delusive perceptions in this life and an upper region in which disembodied souls can see reality directly – that is, between the unstable objects of sensation and opinion and the immutable Forms that are the objects of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> A Platonic

<sup>1</sup> Indeed as Friedländer says (1, 261), superficially at least the judgement and fate of the soul appear as annexes.

<sup>2</sup> (Frutiger, *M. de P.* 61 f.) Thus Friedländer, *Pl.* 1, 267: 'Just as Aristotle in his meteorology considered the theory important enough to refute it, so we, too, must assign it a place with Plato's science of nature.' To say, as Hackforth does (*Ph.* 180), that because Tartarus is a name taken from mythology neither it nor the rivers flowing into and out of it are 'real', is to beg the question. Ostensibly at least, what P. is doing is to give a scientific basis to the old mythologies.

<sup>3</sup> For opinions that it is *not* spherical see p. 336 n. 1 above.

<sup>4</sup> 'If we remove this layer, introduced by P.'s Form-haunted imagination, we are left with a self-contained cosmological picture' (my trans. of Friedländer 1928, 1, 246, Eng. ed. 1, 264).

## *The Phaedo*

myth is a delicate fabric which may be destroyed by any attempt to separate its woven threads. Friedländer has probably gone as far as one should, and has certainly achieved considerable clarification of the two main lines of thought, physical and eschatological, with which we are presented.

Plato's own clues can be interpreted according to individual predilections. Socrates cannot *prove* what he has learned about the earth, but will describe it according to his 'conviction' (πέπεισμαι, 108d-e). To Friedländer (I, 265), Plato here and elsewhere 'insists upon' the scientific nature of the first part of his account, whereas other critics concentrate on the impossibility of proof. The summing-up of the whole myth, though in irritatingly clumsy syntax, perhaps gives more of a lead (114d):

Now to insist that these things are just as I have described them would not befit a sensible man; but a belief that this or something similar is the truth about our souls and their habitations – since the soul has been shown to be immortal – is proper and worth banking on (κινδυνεύσαι) for one who thinks as we do.<sup>1</sup> The venture is a splendid one, and one must, so to speak, sing such things over to oneself like a charm. That is why I have been telling my story at such length.

The moral of it all, as he says in the next sentence, is that a man need have no fear for his soul if he has throughout life rejected bodily pleasures and ornaments and decked the soul with her own adornments: self-control, justice, courage, freedom and truth. The metaphor of 'charming away' one's fears has been used before (77e), and goes with the religious language which is such an essential part of the dialogue.

*Conclusion.* Whatever people may say,<sup>2</sup> the *Phaedo* is about the immortality of the soul, and the posthumous blessedness of the wise

<sup>1</sup> ολομένω οὕτως ἔχειν, which literally yields the unsurprising statement that to believe this is right for someone who thinks it is so. Robin takes it to refer to the soul's immortality, which is perhaps just possible. In general translators tend to dodge the words and editors to pass them over, though Bluck has a note.

<sup>2</sup> Hackforth, *Ph.* 3: the purpose 'is not, of course [!], to prove that the human soul is immortal . . . it is not to pay a tribute of admiration to a beloved friend and master, it is not to expound and propagate a metaphysical doctrine. . . ' Archer-Hind, x: 'the demonstration of immortality is neither the express purpose nor the most important philosophical result'. To J. P. Anton (*Arethusa*, 1968) the 'ultimate theme' is neither immortality nor the Forms but 'the existential demonstration of the Platonic ideal of the good life'.

and good. The doctrine of eternal Forms itself (never argued but taken for granted, 65 d) and the theory of recollection are ancillary to this, and the need to make the soul's tendance our paramount consideration is no more than an important consequence (107c). To persuade us of it Plato uses every possible approach, and two in particular, as Olympiodorus<sup>1</sup> said: 'the one mythical and Orphic, the other dialectical and philosophic'. The inadequacy (from today's standpoint) and 'foreignness' of the reasoning must always militate against a definitive interpretation. Reading the literature only shows how equally good scholars can disagree about the arguments because of our alien ways of thinking. In Plato's way, logic and philosophical method, still at an early stage, are nowhere treated for their own sake, but must be extracted from an amalgam of ontology, theory of causation, exhortation and consolation. Scarcely any philosophical work has been subjected to such gruelling, word-for-word inquisition,<sup>2</sup> yet we might do well to emulate the hesitation which Socrates's friends felt in pressing their counter-arguments on such an occasion (84d). For Plato, one of the most powerful ingredients of the 'charm' was undoubtedly the calm, humorous confidence with which Socrates left the world behind him on that day. 'Bury me as you like, Cebes, if you can catch me. . . I'm afraid Cebes has been deaf to what I have been saying to console you and myself, that when I drink the poison I shall not remain with you [as a corpse] but be off to share the joys of the blessed.'

Very tentatively I would go further. We know by now how carefully Plato selects the circumstances and characters of a dialogue to fit the kind of arguments he wants to use. If he chose at this time to make Socrates expound the doctrine of Forms and a conception of the soul in a talk on the day of his death, with friends and sympathizers ready to meet him half way, rather than in, say, paternal, maieutic discussion with a young boy or argument with a Sophist, this was because they were for him articles of semi-religious belief: he is convinced of their truth, but not yet ready to offer full dialectical proof. Both these

<sup>1</sup> *In Ph.* pp. 1 and 17 Norvin. See Frank, *P. u. sog. Pyth.* 293.

<sup>2</sup> An example is the 38½ pp. of K. W. Mills in *Phron.* 1957 and 1958 on 74b7-c6. H. Erbse, in a sympathetic article (*Phron.* 1969), illustrates the mistake of those who 'condemn P. without basing themselves on the groundwork of his own presuppositions' (p. 101).

## *The Symposium*

central doctrines appear later in a changed form which takes account of some of the reasoned objections to which they are here open. As dialectic progresses, the field of mythical expression is reduced, and the philosopher's aim is to reduce it as far as possible; but unlike his greatest pupil he would never deny that there are some truths, and those the greatest, which can never be demonstrated by the methods of dialectical reasoning. At no stage would he have called myths 'sophisms' and dismissed them as 'not worth serious consideration'.<sup>1</sup>

### (2) THE SYMPOSIUM<sup>2</sup>

*Date.* A *terminus post quem* is generally thought to be furnished by the words 'as the Arcadians were split up by the Spartans' (193a), regarded as an anachronistic reference to the dispersion of the Mantineans in 385. To put it soon after this accords with another general impression, that in feeling it is close to the *Phaedo*. This depends, however, on what one thinks of Plato's attitude to immortality in the *Symposium* (pp. 387-92 below). In subject-matter it is closest to the *Phaedrus*, and almost certainly earlier. Xenophon's *Symposium* is a very different work, and there is not much point in prolonging the controversy over which came first.<sup>3</sup>

*Dramatic date.* The scene of the main narrative is the dinner given to his friends by the tragic poet Agathon when he won the prize

<sup>1</sup> Arist., *Metaph.* 1000a 18. These remarks on P.'s attitude to myth are amplified in my *OGR* 239f.

<sup>2</sup> Extensive bibliographies will be found in Capelle's revision of Apelt's ed. (1960, compiled by Wilpert) and Rosen (1968).

<sup>3</sup> Wilamowitz (*Pl.* I, 372 n. 1; II, 176-8) argued, against the general assumption of an anachronism, that 193a referred to events of 418. This view, revived by Mattingley in 1958, was again opposed in detail by Dover, *Phron.* 1965. For earlier views see Robin, *TPA* 55-63. Because he thinks *Symp.* excludes immortality, Morrison (*CQ* 1964, 43-6) would even put it before *Gorg.*, *Meno* and the first Italian visit, which I find improbable. On its relation to *Phaedrus* (Robin, *TPA* 63-109) Bury changed his mind between his first and second editions. Apart from their general subject-matter, he noted over a dozen more or less similar short passages in both dialogues (p. lxvii n. 2). There is something to be said too for the view expressed by Bernhardt as 'le Banquet prélude au Phédon' (*P. et Mat. Anc.* 211). Tredennick (*Xen's. Mem. and Symp.* 19) thinks Dover in *Phron.* 1965, 9-16, has settled the priority of P. over Xen. (See also vol. III, 342 with n. 2.) This would settle a controversy of (on Dover's own statement) over 160 years, on which e.g. Robin (Budé ed. cix-cxv) could only pronounce a 'non liquet'. On Xenophon's *Symp.* in general see vol. III, 340-4.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

with his first tragedy, in 416 B.C.<sup>1</sup> The circumstances of its narration are made extraordinarily complicated. Apollodorus (the emotional character of *Phaedo* 59a and 117d) is asked by an unnamed group (not philosophers but rich businessmen, 173c) to tell the story of Agathon's party. He is not unprepared, having recently complied with the same request from a certain Glaucon.<sup>2</sup> Glaucon had heard of it from one Phoenix, who was however very confused and had given the impression that the event was recent, whereas it had happened when Apollodorus was still a child. This and other indications (mentioned by Bury, lxvi) point to a date of about 400 or a little earlier for the narration. Apollodorus's informant was the uninvited guest Aristodemus, but he has confirmed some points from Socrates himself.

*Setting and characters.* The involved introduction does of course make it plain that Plato himself was not present at the events narrated, and, said Taylor (*PMW* 210), 'does not therefore pretend to guarantee the historical accuracy of the narrative in detail'.<sup>3</sup> This Taylor thought was its real purpose, but the date of the gathering (when Plato was about eleven) was sufficient to ensure it, as with the *Protagoras* where the narrator is Socrates himself. I think that, as in the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus*, Plato was at least as much concerned to give dramatic verisimilitude to the telling of the story. Both aims are furthered by the information that Aristodemus did not remember all the speeches nor Apollodorus all that he had been told (178a, 180c), and at the end Aristodemus fell asleep and missed much of what Socrates said to Agathon and Aristophanes (223b-d).

Besides the *Phaedo*, Apollodorus is mentioned in the *Apology* (34a) among friends supporting Socrates in court, in the *Protagoras* as father of the blushful young Hippocrates, and by Xenophon (*Mem.* 3.11.17) as a constant follower of Socrates. The other follower, 'little' Aristodemus as he is called both here and by Xenophon (*Mem.* 1.4.2),

<sup>1</sup> Athen. 5.217a (archonship of Euphemus). Plato, he adds, was fourteen at the time.

<sup>2</sup> Otherwise unknown; not P.'s brother who figures in *Rep.* (Taylor, *Parm.* 3).

<sup>3</sup> Contrast Bury xvi: 'The way in which Aristodemus, the primary source, and Apollodorus, the secondary source, are described is evidently intended to produce the impression that in them we have reliable witnesses.'

## The Symposium

is described by Xenophon as an irreligious man whom Socrates converted with the argument from design. He 'always went barefoot', presumably favouring the 'Cynic' side of Socrates. Agathon the prize-winner and host was introduced in the *Protagoras* as a mere boy, the favourite of Pausanias as he is still (193 b; also in Xenophon, *Symp.* 8.32). Ostensibly there is a gap of some sixteen years between the dramatic dates of the two dialogues, and he must now be thought of as about thirty. Yet he is called 'young' and almost 'boy' (νέος and νεανίσκος, 175 e, 198 a). When it suits Plato that someone should be 'the handsomest of the company' (213 c), he is not too scrupulous about such epithets. Agathon's urbanity, tact and other characteristics have been well described from the dialogue itself by Robin (lxv) and Bury (xxxiv f.). Five years after his present victory, his effeminacy was pilloried by Aristophanes in the *Thesmophoriazusae*. Phaedrus is sole interlocutor with Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, and was mentioned in the *Protagoras* as sitting at the feet of Hippias. His character is beautifully drawn both here and in the *Phaedrus*. (See Robin xxxvi-xxxviii for this and mentions in Lysias and Alexis.) Eryximachus the doctor is one of those listening to Hippias in the *Protagoras* (315 c), and both here and in the *Phaedrus* (268 a) appears as a friend of Phaedrus, but is known only from the pages of Plato.<sup>1</sup> Of Aristophanes and Alcibiades nothing need be said here.<sup>2</sup> All the speakers except Aristophanes were present as eager listeners at the gathering of Sophists in the *Protagoras*, and although too much has sometimes been made of this,<sup>3</sup> no doubt we are intended to remember it as we read their speeches, which certainly show Sophistic influence.

The speakers speak in their seating order, from left to right starting

<sup>1</sup> But Xenophon tells a story of his father Acumenus (*Mem.* 3.13.2). To one who complained that he found no pleasure in eating, Socrates replied that Acumenus knew a good prescription for that. 'Oh, what is it?' 'Stop eating.'

<sup>2</sup> But on Aristophanes's presence at the party see vol. III, 375, and for Alcibiades and his relations with S., the index to the same volume.

<sup>3</sup> See Bury lvii with n. 1. Though the speakers are all historical characters, each has been given a double. Phaedrus is Tisias, Pausanias Protagoras or Xenophon, Eryximachus Hippias, Aristophanes Prodicus, Agathon Gorgias. For Brochard on the other hand (*Études* 68-71), Phaedrus's speech is a parody of Lysias, Pausanias's of Prodicus. Only Socrates and Alcibiades are allowed by these critics to be themselves.



## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

with Phaedrus, and some have seen deep significance in this order.<sup>1</sup> I doubt if Plato was troubling himself much about it. Aristodemus himself was placed next to Eryximachus (175 a), i.e. between him and Agathon, yet he makes no mention of either speaking or being excused, and between Phaedrus and Pausanias were 'several others' whose speeches are not recorded.

### *The dialogue*

(The reported and direct dramatic forms are so interwoven that one cannot assign it to one or the other. For the prologue, see above, pp. 365 f.)

*Introduction* (172 a–178 a). Aristodemus the eye-witness narrator met Socrates looking unusually clean and well dressed and learned that he was going to a private dinner-party of Agathon's on the evening after the public celebration of his theatrical triumph. S. suggested that Aristodemus should come with him, and he would take responsibility for the invitation. However, on the way, struck by some thought, he stopped, telling Aristodemus not to wait for him, and Aristodemus was in the embarrassing position of arriving alone. However, Agathon courteously invited him to join the rest, and learning what had happened, sent a servant to look for S. On hearing that he was standing in a neighbour's porch and would not budge, he was for using stronger measures, but Aristodemus dissuaded him; this was a way S. had, and he would come in his own time.<sup>2</sup>

When he came in half-way through the meal, Agathon placed him next to himself, and after some friendly banter between them,<sup>3</sup> S. addressed himself to his dinner. After the post-prandial ceremonies, when the *symposium* proper began, Pausanias suggested that since they were all suffering from the effects of the previous day's public celebrations, the drinking should be moderate and voluntary. This

<sup>1</sup> Rosen 31 f. criticizes the attempts of Isenberg, *Order of Discourses* etc. and Plochmann, *Hiccups*. Cf. also Wilamowitz, *Pl.* 1, 367, on P.'s superiority to such considerations.

<sup>2</sup> On this habit of withdrawal, of which Alcibiades at 220 c–d gives a more striking example, see vol. III, 404 f. Here the fit of abstraction is said to have lasted 'quite a short time for him'.

<sup>3</sup> On Agathon's suggestion that he might absorb S.'s wisdom by physical contact, see vol. III, 400 f.

## *The Symposium*

being agreed, Eryximachus proposed that they dismiss the flute-girl and entertain themselves with talk. Each in turn shall deliver an encomium on Eros, god of love, beginning with Phaedrus (who is the real 'father' of the proposal through his constant complaints to Eryximachus that Eros never gets his due).<sup>1</sup> Socrates ('expert in matters of love alone') enthusiastically agrees, as do the others, and Phaedrus begins.

*Speech of Phaedrus (178a-180b).* Eros is the oldest and most reverend of the gods, and brings out all that is best in a man. There is no one by whom a lover would be so ashamed to be seen in any cowardly, mean or disgraceful action as by his beloved. Only lovers will sacrifice life itself for another – women as well as men, as witness Alcestis, whereas Orpheus failed to regain Eurydice because his love was not strong enough to face death. Such sacrifice is even more admired by the gods if it be offered by the beloved, as when Achilles accepted death to avenge and join Patroclus, for he has not, like his lover, the inspiration afforded by divine possession.

*Speech of Pausanias (180c-185c).* Which Eros am I to praise? Since there are two Aphrodites of different parentage, the Heavenly and the Vulgar or Popular (Pandemos), there must be two Eroses. Love, like every other activity, is either good or bad according to the way it is practised. The son of Aphrodite Pandemos is indeed vulgar, standing for physical rather than spiritual love, of women as much as boys, and even preferring the object of its passion to be stupid. The other Eros comes from Heavenly Aphrodite who, being motherless, has nothing about her of the female. He presides over love of males, not wanton or promiscuous sensual desire but an attachment to those already reaching years of discretion, based on intellectual sympathy and forming the foundation for a lifelong association. Connexions with young boys, which can only be for passing pleasure, should be forbidden by law.

Some Greek states encourage love between males, others like the Ionians forbid it, under Oriental influence; for Oriental rulers are

<sup>1</sup> On the justice of this complaint see Gould, *PL* 24.

tyrants, who regard strong personal attachments as a threat to their power, like intellectual and athletic achievement. It is not to the credit of a country that the indulgence of a lover should be either condemned wholesale or approved unreservedly. The complex Athenian attitude is better. On the one hand a lover has no need to conceal his passion, especially if its object be worthy, and behaviour which in other contexts would be reprehensible, even perjury, is condoned on the ground that his aim is a noble one. When we see however that tutors are strictly charged by fathers to allow a boy no communication with a lover, and that the contemporaries of such a boy will insult him unrebuked, we might suppose that love is thought disgraceful. In fact, as I say, it is in itself neither good nor bad, but depends for its worth on the way it is practised. The object of our tradition is to test the lover, whether he be of the sensual, inconstant type which should be rejected, or one who will be a true friend to the object of his love, and assist his advance in goodness and wisdom. Only to such a one is it right to yield. Therefore a youth must yield neither quickly, before time has tested the character of his lover, nor from motives of fear, greed, ambition, or anything else but desire for moral and intellectual improvement. This is the Heavenly Eros, all other is the Vulgar.

*Aristophanes has hiccups* (185c-e). It was now the turn of Aristophanes, but he had hiccups, so he turned to his medical neighbour and said, 'Eryximachus, you must either cure my hiccups or take my turn to speak.' 'I will do both', said E., and having prescribed a remedial procedure, began as follows.

*Speech of Eryximachus* (185e-188e). Pausanias was right to mention the duality of Eros, but he did not bring out what my medical education has taught me, that his influence is not confined to human beings, but universal. Take medicine itself. Healthy and sick bodies have contrary desires; and just as Pausanias said one must gratify good men and refuse the base, a good doctor must gratify the good and healthy parts of the body and deny the morbid. Medicine is entirely within the province of Eros, since its function is to unite

## *The Symposium*

in love and harmony the most hostile elements in the body – that is, the opposites hot and cold, bitter and sweet, wet and dry etc. Similarly music exhibits understanding of love in the sphere of high and low notes and slow and fast rhythms (which is probably what Heraclitus meant to say, though he put it badly). The same is true of physical training and agriculture, and the weather too.<sup>1</sup> Under the influence of the good Eros the elements are temperate and health-giving, but when the wanton Eros controls them, their disorderly arrogance brings plague and sickness on animals and plants alike. In religion too Eros is at work, indeed he is everywhere omnipotent. The good Eros is the greater, who brings self-control and justice and is responsible for our happiness and harmonious relations with each other and the gods. The lower one should only be indulged cautiously and without excess.

Aristophanes had now cured his hiccups by the last of Eryximachus's prescriptions, the sneeze, and after asking Aristophanically whether it can really be the good love in his body that demands such noise and irritation, and being warned against making such jokes if he wants his speech to be taken seriously, he began.

*Speech of Aristophanes (189a–193d).* To understand the power of Eros, and how much we are indebted to him, one must know the nature and history of mankind. Originally there were three sexes, male, female and hermaphrodite. Individuals were round in shape, back and sides forming a circle – with four arms and four legs, one head with two faces and four ears, two sets of reproductive organs and everything else to match. They walked upright, but to run fast they simply turned cartwheels, using all eight limbs. Males sprang from the sun, females from the earth, and hermaphrodites from the moon – hence the circular<sup>2</sup> shape – and in the pride of their strength they attacked the gods. In this dilemma (for to destroy the race would

<sup>1</sup> The effect on character of the various musical modes (ἁρμονίαι), in which P. strongly believed, is elaborated in the *Rep.* (398c ff.). On E.'s quotation here of Heraclitus fr. 51 see vol. 1, 436f.

<sup>2</sup> Round is στρογγύλος, circle κύκλος, circular περιφερής. Morrison in *Phron.* 1959, 108f., argues with some plausibility that these beings were not spherical as editors and translators have usually assumed (though this does not prove his case against the sphericity of the earth in *Phaedo*, for which see p. 366 n. 1 above).

deprive them of sacrifice and worship) Zeus had an idea. To weaken men without destroying them he sliced each in half like a hard-boiled egg, leaving them only two legs to walk on, with the threat of further bisection if they did not behave. Then Apollo, on his orders, turned the faces round to the cut side, pulled the skin together and tied it in the middle, forming the navel.

This done, each half was seized with such longing to be re-joined to its fellow that they spent all their time locked in embraces and were dying of starvation and inertia, until Zeus, in pity, had the further idea of moving their reproductive organs to the front. In their former state, with these on the outside, they had begotten not on each other but on the earth,<sup>1</sup> but now they could beget by intercourse between male and female, or if male joined to male, at least the desire for togetherness was satisfied and they could turn to the other business of life.

So the instinct of love is an attempt to restore our original state. Halves of hermaphrodites are heterosexual, halves of women are Lesbians and those of men are drawn to men from their boyhood. It is wrong to stigmatize these boys as shameless and immoral. They are the best of our youth, inspired not by wantonness but by courage and masculinity, and in maturity provide the finest statesmen. They become lovers of boys in their turn, and only marry and have children from a sense of duty. When a lover – whether of boys or not – has the luck to meet his own actual other half, the pair are so overcome with affection and the feeling of belonging that they cannot bear to be apart, and their friendship is for life. This is no mere physical urge, but an inexpressive longing of the soul. Eryximachus may say that I am getting at Pausanias and Agathon, but I am speaking quite generally of men and women alike. For our happiness we must take Eros as leader, and obeying his command find our true mate, or at least the one most congenial to our own nature, and by fulfilling our love return as nearly as possible to our pristine state.

*Socrates and Agathon* (1) (194a–e). This left only Agathon and Socrates, and S., *via* his own expression of misgivings about following Agathon

<sup>1</sup> 'Like cicadas', he adds. Cf. Guthrie, *In the B.* 114f.

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after the latter's splendid display of eloquence in the theatre, and Agathon's response that he finds a small but intelligent company more formidable than a crowd, tries to lead him into a question-and-answer discussion: if he had done something to be ashamed of, would he feel shame before 'the many' as he would before the wise? But Phaedrus knows his man, and soon puts a stop to this. If A. lets himself be inveigled into a Socratic argument, it will be all up with their plan. Let each pay his tribute to Eros, then they can converse as much as they like. A. agrees and begins.

*Speech of Agathon (194e-197e).* We must praise Eros himself, not only his gifts. Of all the blessed gods, he is most blessed and fairest. First, he is (*pace* Phaedrus) the youngest, the very antithesis of old age. If he had, as Hesiod said, been there from the beginning, none of the early quarrels and violence among the gods would have occurred. Since his coming among them, they have lived in peaceful accord. Tender he is too, dwelling in those tender spots, the hearts of men and gods (for he shuns the hard-hearted), and supple.<sup>1</sup> How otherwise could he insinuate himself, unperceived, into – and again steal out of – those hearts? With this go his gracefulness, shapeliness and blooming beauty: he is the enemy of all ugliness, and settles only where there is blossom and fragrance, be it in body, soul or elsewhere.

Besides beauty, he possesses all the virtues. He is just, for everyone serves him willingly, and in mutual consent is no wrong; self-controlled, for that means mastering pleasures and desires, and no pleasure is stronger than love; brave, for he overcame the god of war himself.<sup>2</sup> As for his genius,<sup>3</sup> to copy Eryximachus and take my own craft first, he is a poet and can create poets: anyone touched by love turns poet. That he can create living creatures everyone knows, and it was under the guidance of love and desire that every other skill was

<sup>1</sup> For the meaning of ὑγρός (*lit.* moist or liquid) see vol. 1, 61f.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to the story of Ares and Aphrodite in Homer, *Od.* 8.266ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Sophia*, regularly, as we know, accounted one of the cardinal virtues. 'Wisdom' is scarcely appropriate in this context. For the connexion with practical skills see vol. III, 27f. 'Genius' (M. Joyce) is perhaps the best choice.

discovered by the appropriate god.<sup>1</sup> Thus he is both beautiful and good and the cause of beauty and goodness for others.

So after a poetic outburst and a grandiloquent peroration heaping on Eros every laudatory epithet and all the gems of the rhetorical *technai*, A. ceased with the remark that he had done his best to honour the god in a mixture of play and earnest.

*Socrates and Agathon* (2) (198b–201c). Enthusiastic applause greeted the host's speech, and S. lamented his lot in having to follow such unattainable brilliance, worthy of Gorgias. In his folly he had supposed that one simply had to speak the truth – selecting and arranging it to the best advantage no doubt – whereas what seems to have been agreed was to ascribe all beauty and every virtue to the subject whether truly or falsely. He could not be a party to this. It was all a misunderstanding, and he had better cry off unless he can just speak in his own way. Competing with the others would only make him ridiculous. Told to do as he pleased, he asked permission to put 'a few small questions' to Agathon first, to get his agreement before beginning.

The upshot of these questions is that love or desire is a relative term, and Eros therefore exists only relationally: as a father or brother must be father or brother *of* somebody, so love or desire is *of* somebody or something. But one only desires what one lacks, so if Eros desires beauty and goodness he cannot possess them, i.e. cannot be beautiful and good.<sup>2</sup> With this established, S. proceeds.

*Speech of Socrates* (201d–212c). I will tell what I learned of love from Diotima, a wise woman of Mantinea. I had been calling Eros a great, good and beautiful god, and she had brought against me the arguments which I have just put to A. Astonished, I asked, 'What? Is he ugly and bad?' Not at all. One does not have to be at one or the other of two extremes. Eros is between the two, just as there is a

<sup>1</sup> He mentions archery, prophecy, medicine (Apollo), music (the Muses), metal-work (Hephaestus), weaving (Athena), and government (Zeus); but leaves us to guess what can be the connexion of Love with all these.

<sup>2</sup> On the apparent confusion here between love and the lover see Allen in *Monist* 1966.

## The Symposium

state between knowledge and ignorance, namely guessing right without being able to justify your conviction. Similarly it is wrong to call him a god, for gods are happy and beautiful, and Eros cannot be happy if (as is now admitted) he lacks goodness and beauty. Nor is he mortal. He belongs to the spirits (*daimones*), who mediate between gods and mortals, conveying upwards the prayers and sacrifices of men, and downwards the commands and answers from the gods. Without them, heaven and earth would fall apart, for there is no direct intercourse between god and man. Prophets, and those skilled in rites and charms, are 'spiritual' men who can ensure this communication. The spirits are of many sorts, and Eros is one of them.

His birth came about thus, At the feast of the gods to celebrate the birth of Aphrodite, Poros<sup>1</sup> got drunk and was found by Penia (Poverty) asleep in Zeus's garden. She lay down beside him and conceived Eros. First then, begotten on Aphrodite's birthday, he is her follower in loving beauty. As son of Poverty he is not tender and fair as usually supposed, but tough, barefoot and homeless, sleeping rough in doorways and streets; but from his father he inherits all sorts of plans to acquire the beauty and good that he longs for; is enterprising, vigorous, full of devices, seeking wisdom ('philosophizing') always, a wizard and a sophist, dying and reviving, losing what he gains, midway between wisdom and ignorance. Those who suppose him good and beautiful confuse him with the *object* of love, whereas Eros is the lover.

Eros then represents love of beauty. The question 'And what advantage will possession of beauty give anyone?' is easier to answer if we substitute 'goodness',<sup>2</sup> for we agreed that to possess what is good is to be happy, and that is a final answer. It is senseless to ask why anyone wants to be happy. This then is what love means, though the name is commonly applied to what is only one species (*eidos* 205 b) of it, just as poetry (*poiesis*, lit. 'making') has usurped a more general term. We do not call all craftsmen poets, nor do we call

<sup>1</sup> *Poros* means 'finding a way', resourcefulness. Whoever has it enjoys εὐπορία, plenty (Democr. fr. 101 DK). So Spenser calls Love 'begot of Plentie and of Penurie'. *Penia* on the other hand is 'resourceless' (δυστοπος 204 b7).

<sup>2</sup> On this substitution cf. p. 247 n. 1 above.



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lovers those whose desires express themselves in business, athletics or philosophy. Love is desire for what is good – not even for what is our own (as some say that in love we are seeking our other halves) unless what belongs to us is good. Men will have their very limbs amputated rather than keep them if they are poisoned. Love, then, is *desire for permanent possession of the good*.

But how does it seek its goal? What is its activity? This she described as *bringing forth in beauty* (or the beautiful), which puzzled me, and she explained that everyone is pregnant, in body and soul, and on reaching a certain age we have a natural desire to give birth. This impulse is divine, a spark of immortality in the mortal, and cannot be fulfilled in what is out of harmony with the divine, as ugliness is. Eileithyia, goddess of birth, is in fact Beauty. So in the presence of beauty the pregnant is relaxed and at ease and gives birth, but on the approach of ugliness it contracts and shrinks away and cannot be relieved of its burden. The thrill which beauty imparts lies in the hope that it will bring deliverance from travail.

Another time she asked if I knew why there was this fierce urge to breed and to feed and protect the young – not only among men (who might be actuated by reason) but among animals and birds, and when I confessed ignorance she explained it by the natural longing of all mortal creatures to exist for ever, the only possible form of immortality being to leave behind another like oneself. Even in this life, what we call one identical man has from boyhood to age suffered many changes of both body and personality. Ambition has the same motive, to live for ever at least in men's memories: it is the spur to all noble deeds. Finally there are the spiritually pregnant, whose desire is for offspring of the soul, for wisdom and virtue. Such are poets, inventors, and above all those who produce justice and moderation in the ordering of society.

A young man blessed with this spiritual pregnancy seeks the beauty in which he can bring forth. Physical beauty will attract him, and when he finds it united with beauty of soul he is delivered, and he and his friend bring up the offspring together; that is, he educates him, speaking to him of what a good man should be and do. This tie is stronger than that between children and parents, inasmuch as the

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'children' are finer and more immortal.<sup>1</sup> Were not the laws of Lysurgus and Solon a finer progeny than any mortal children could be?

These are the lesser mysteries of love. The final revelation might, she thought, be beyond my grasp, but she would speak of it nevertheless. The candidate for full initiation must first fall in love with one fair body and beget noble thoughts. Soon he must see that visible beauty is everywhere the same, and despise the passion he felt for a single manifestation of it. The next step is to rate beauty of soul higher than bodily beauty, and loving it even in an ill-favoured frame, to bring forth the sort of ideas which make young people better. This will lead him to look at the beauty in ways of life and laws,<sup>2</sup> and seeing that all this is related, to think little of mere physical beauty. From there he must be guided to the beauty of knowledge in all its forms, and so will no longer be devoted to one boy or man or activity but gazing on the whole sea of beauty will bring forth magnificent thoughts in the abundance of philosophy until, thus fortified, he catches sight of a knowledge of beauty such as I shall now describe. Try, said she, to follow me closely.

All that went before has been preparation for the sudden glimpse of this amazing beauty. It is eternal and changeless, never in any respect, in any part, or by any standard other than beautiful; not physical, not reason or knowledge, not *in* anything, but absolute and unique. All other beauties share it, yet so that their birth or passing away leave it unaffected. This is the true progress of love, to start with a fair body and climb as by a ladder to the vision of Beauty itself, pure of all flesh or colour or other mortal rubbish. Only by intercourse with that will the lover bring forth true, not counterfeit, virtue, for truth is his consort. Such a man the gods love, and to him if anyone will immortality be granted.

Such was her teaching, and, believing it, I try to persuade others to honour Eros in practising love as I do, for none will help us more to gain this supreme gift.

<sup>1</sup> Can one be 'more immortal'? Yes, according to Diotima (ἀθανατωτέρων).

<sup>2</sup> We must remember that beauty, beautiful, here simply stand for the Greek *kalon*, on the wide meaning of which see pp. 177f., 181f. above. To speak of activities and laws as *kala* is a perfectly natural way of commending them.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

*Entry of Alcibiades (212c-215a).* When S. had finished, there were heard sounds of revelry, a knock on the door, and the voice of Alcibiades loudly demanding Agathon. Standing in the doorway, supported by a flute-girl and his companions and with a wreath on his head, he asked if he might join the party, drunk as he was. At least he would crown Agathon with his wreath. Everyone called to him to come and sit down, and his friends put him between Agathon and S.; but having the ribbons of the wreath in front of his eyes as he tried to crown Agathon, he did not at first see S. When he did, he jumped up and shouted, 'Socrates! It's an ambush! And how did you manage to sit next the handsomest man in the room?' S. in mock terror called on Agathon to protect him from the jealous rage of his favourite, and Alcibiades went on: 'I'll settle with you later. Now Agathon, give me some of those ribbons back to crown the wondrous head of the world champion of words – not just once like you, but always.' After crowning S. and sitting down, he complained that the company was still sober, called for a wine-cooler holding nearly four pints, emptied it and had it refilled for S., who, he remarked, would drink as much as you told him to and be none the worse for it.

At this point Eryximachus intervened and explained their plan. Alcibiades had had his drink, so he must make his speech. He replied, first, that it was unfair to ask a man already half-seas-over to compete with the sober, and secondly that in S.'s presence he could never praise anyone else. 'All right, give us a eulogy of S., then'; and in spite of S.'s protests, he begins.

*Speech of Alcibiades (215a-222b).* I shall have to rely on similes. S. is like the Sileni you see in sculptors' shops, which open up and have images of gods inside, or like Marsyas the Satyr. Apart from having a satyr's looks and impudence, he can do by mere words what Marsyas did with music – send people crazy, with leaping hearts and streaming eyes, as no orator could. He even makes *me* feel ashamed, as if with my life of politics I was neglecting myself and my shortcomings. I know he's right, yet when I'm away from him I can't resist the lure of popularity. I sometimes wish him dead – but if he were, I'd be even more upset.

As for the Sileni, outwardly he is always falling for young men,

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but open him up and you find glorious treasure<sup>1</sup> within, and a miraculous self-control. He thinks nothing of good looks, any more than of wealth or rank. I speak from experience. I was proud of my good looks, and supposing him serious in his passion for me,<sup>2</sup> I thought that by giving him what he wanted I would get his knowledge in return. After several indirect attempts, I got him to dine and spend the night with me and told him frankly what was in my mind. He replied with his usual irony that if I really thought he could make me a better man, the beauty of that so much surpassed my own that the bargain savoured of sharp practice; but that I should think it over, because very probably I was mistaken in him. Some day we should talk it over and do whatever was best for both of us. So I spent the night with him as if with a father or elder brother. After that I was in a worse state than ever, torn between my own humiliation and admiration for his strength of mind, unable either to forgo his company or make him do what I wanted.

His courage and endurance I learned to know on campaigns, in a freezing northern winter and in battle at Potidaea, where he saved my life and ought to have had the award that was made to me, as well as in the retreat from Delium.<sup>3</sup> There simply is no one like him, hence my resort to the Sileni for a comparison. I forgot to say that it applies to his talk too. On the surface it's absurd, all about blacksmiths and cobblers and tanners and always repeating itself.<sup>4</sup> But open it up and you find inside the only arguments that make sense, together with divine images of virtue and everything one needs to study to be a proper man.

<sup>1</sup> This is the word (ἀγαλματα, 216e6) used earlier for images of the gods, but literally meaning anything conferring honour, glory or delight.

<sup>2</sup> For S.'s supposed passion for Alc. see vol. III, 395 (where in n. 1 the fr. of Aeschines should be 11c, not 10c).

<sup>3</sup> The stories Alc. told to illustrate S.'s indifference to his surroundings and power of withdrawal have been told in vol. III, 389 and 404. How he saved Alc.'s life at Potidaea is also told by Plutarch in his life of Alc. (ch. 7, 194e-195a, where we learn that the award in question was a wreath and a suit of armour), and his service there is mentioned at *Charm.* 153a. Laches praises his conduct in the retreat from Delium at *Laches* 181b, and he himself mentions the campaigns he served on at *Apol.* 28e.

<sup>4</sup> 221e αἰὶ διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τὰ αὐτὰ φαίνεται λέγειν. For the charge of harping on banalistic occupations and always repeating the same things cf. *Gorg.* 490e-491a and *Xen. Mem.* 4.4.5-6. S.'s stock reply ('Yes, and on the same subjects') amounts to a boast of consistency. Cf. *Thuc.* 1.22.3 for the opposite fault: even eye-witnesses of an event οὐ περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν τὰ αὐτὰ ἔλεγον.

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Well, gentlemen, that's what S. has done to me – and to Charmides and a lot of others – pretending to be in love with us when it's really the other way round. Be warned by our experience and don't let him take you in.

*Conclusion* (222c–223d). S. declared that Alcibiades was simply trying to make trouble between him and Agathon, and while some byplay was going on between them the room was invaded by an uproarious band of revellers and orderly conversation became impossible. Some of the party left, Aristodemus fell asleep and awoke at cockcrow to find only S., Agathon and Aristophanes awake, and passing round a large cup while S. proved to them that a good tragic poet could also write comedies and vice versa.<sup>1</sup> Eventually both nodded off, and S. left them, had a bath, and spent the day as usual.

### *Comment*

'Before the entrance to the Academy there is an altar of Love.'

(Pausanias 1.30.1)

Many of Plato's works baffle the pedestrian commentator with their wayward brilliance, but none is so deeply embedded in the ethos of its time as the *Symposium*. Apart from the attitude to sexual love, the after-dinner *symposion*, with its rules and *arbiter bibendi*, has no precise modern parallel. Later it became a literary vehicle for imaginary exchanges of views and information, but the comparative lifelessness of these productions only shows up by contrast the dramatic realism of the characters in Plato's original.<sup>2</sup> As usual, Plato's aims were complex, but one of them was certainly to round off his portrait of Socrates by showing him in a relaxed and convivial mood,<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> At *Rep.* 395 a P. makes him say the opposite. Adam *ad loc.* suggests a plausible explanation, and Bury (*Symp.* p. 171) professes to tell us 'the point of S.'s argument'. Since we are not told what S.'s argument was, this seems a little bold. No classical poet wrote both tragedies and comedies (presumably the reference is not to satyr-plays), and most probably the remark is simply a humorous final comment on S.'s character: talking and listening throughout the whole night, and drinking gallons of wine, could never quench his ardour for arguing the most paradoxical theses.

<sup>2</sup> And, to do him justice, Xenophon's. For the error of regarding these two simply as members of an existing series, see vol. III, 344 n. 2 (where I fear I have attributed Breitenbach's contribution to Treu; see *RE*, 2. Reihe, XVIII. Halbb., col. 1928). For the *symposion* as an institution see Robin, *Symp.* xii f., and for extant *Symposia* *ib.* xiii n. 3; or, more fully, J. Martin, *Symposion: Gesch. einer lit. Form*.

<sup>3</sup> Like Xen., but Xen. had to say he was doing it (*Symp.* 1.1).

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through the mouth of the disreputable Alcibiades himself to refute the charge that Socrates had been his evil genius. But to Jowett this was one of those writings which 'hardly admit of a more distinct interpretation than a musical composition... and can with difficulty be rendered in any words but the writer's own'. Plato also shows his versatility (as in the *Phaedrus*) by writing not only dialogue but a series of set speeches reasonably characterized by S. Rosen as 'rhetorical exercises rather than complex philosophical statements'.<sup>1</sup>

First *Phaedrus*,<sup>2</sup> in a brief trifle, shows himself the admirer of both Love and Lysias that he is in the dialogue named after him. His is an artificial affair of literary allusions and rhetorical tricks of style and content, notably the conceit about the beloved's loyalty being finer than the lover's. Its most remarkable feature is that, while accepting the convention of love between males as normal and right, he actually chooses a woman as an example of supreme devotion.

*Pausanias* introduces the dual nature of Eros, heavenly and earthly, spiritual and physical, confines heterosexual love to the latter and defends pederasty if it goes with intellectual companionship. His account of the complex Athenian attitude to homosexuality is of sociological interest,<sup>3</sup> and the double Eros is a small step on the way to Diotima's teaching. Socrates could also have agreed that many actions at least are in themselves neutral and depend for their value on *how* they are performed, for it tallies with his view that the worth of both material goods and spiritual gifts lies not in themselves but in how they are used.<sup>4</sup> In Diotima's speech the value of Eros is determined by its object. This and the notions that spiritual love is

<sup>1</sup> Jowett, *Dialogues*<sup>4</sup> 1, 488; Rosen, *Symp.* xxxvi.

<sup>2</sup> For fuller appraisals of the early speeches, not always in agreement, see Bury xxiv-xxxvi, Taylor *PMW* 212-23, and (more imaginative) Friedländer, *Pl.* III, 11-23. (Bury lists the technical rhetorical tropes in those of *Phaedrus*, *Pausanias* and *Agathon*.) For a modern reader Gould's *PL* ch. 2 is one of the best introductions.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. III, 391f. Some passages of Aeschines in *Timarch.* (9-12, 16-21) are often quoted as evidence that the laws against pederasty at Athens were particularly severe, but in fact they deal only with offences against children, and prostitution or procuring for gain, thus endorsing Pausanias's standards.

<sup>4</sup> *Meno* 87e-88a, *Euthyd.* 280e, 281d-e.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

superior to physical (though for Pausanias it should accompany, not replace it) and that true love does not depend on youthful charm but is for life (181d-e) arouse the suspicion that Plato is giving a kind of parody of Socrates to show how easily his teaching could be misunderstood or misapplied.<sup>1</sup>

*The hiccups of Aristophanes*, which lead to a change in the order of speakers, have been given various inner meanings by commentators.<sup>2</sup> Their variety shows at least that if Plato intended any deep symbolism, it is difficult to be sure what it was. Perhaps it is enough to remember that this is a realistic account of a convivial occasion and that hiccups are an affliction not unlikely to visit at least one of those who had dined well and were now engaged in drinking; and what more suitable victim than Aristophanes, the natural laugh-raiser?

*Eryximachus* follows up the dual Eros of Pausanias, but his real starting-point was in the opening words of Phaedrus about Eros as one of the original cosmic powers, with its corollary that he is active not only in men and animals, but universally as the author of unity and combination in the whole physical world. This is the Love of which Aeschylus and Euripides wrote that it inspires the Sky with passion to impregnate Earth, and Earth to win her marriage, so that when the fertilizing drops fall on her she can bring forth sheep and corn and fruits; the Eros of whom the birds in Aristophanes's comedy sang that only by his mingling of one thing with another were Heaven, Oceanus, Earth and all the blessed gods created; the cosmogonic Love of Orphic poetry and above all of the poet-scientist Empedocles, which blends and reconciles opposites wherever they are, a force both physical and moral. This 'Eros or desire', said

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Alc. I* 131c-d; vol. III, 395, 472.

<sup>2</sup> For older (including ancient) views see Bury xxiif., and for more recent Rosen 90f. with n. 3. More recent still is K. Dorter, 'The Significance of the Speeches in P.'s *Symp.*', *Phil. and Rhet.* 1969. If P. had simply wanted E. to speak first (according to those who believe in a 'dialectical ascent' of the speeches) he could have altered the table-plan. Quite probably he wants to warn the reader that the order of speeches is not significant but accidental. If intended as 'vengeance' for the portrayal of S. in the *Clouds*, the hiccups are an incredibly feeble revenge. It is an odd coincidence that the name Eryximachus should mean 'Hiccups-fighter', but no odder than that S.'s midwife-mother should be Phaenarete (vol. III, 378 n. 1), and it was certainly his real name. It may have been what gave P. the idea.

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Aristotle, was assumed by the earliest thinkers because of the need of a first cause to get things moving and make them combine.<sup>1</sup> One of the eulogists obviously had to celebrate Eros in this widely attested universal aspect, and the medical man was best qualified to do so. Contemporary medical practice relied largely on general theories about the basic opposites hot-cold, wet-dry, bitter-sweet etc., theories of which the attainment of a harmonious blend in a healthy body was only a special application, and the Hippocratic treatises range widely, and often critically, over the whole field of natural philosophy.<sup>2</sup> So Eryximachus has no difficulty in finding Love at work as the reconciler of opposites in medicine, music and climate. Religion is seen rather in terms of the antithesis between good and bad Eros, which in the earlier examples played a minor role. In fact the claim to have taken this antithesis from Pausanias is artificial (as connexions in after-dinner speeches often are), for in this speech the second member is not Love at all but an anti-Love which could much better be called Strife as by Empedocles. But having retained it, he can use it when he returns to the theme of love in the narrow sense (187d-e).

Morally Eryximachus is on a lower level than Pausanias, for he does not condemn the vulgar love outright, but in contrasting it with the heavenly recommends indulging in it 'cautiously, so as to enjoy its pleasure without excess', as a doctor limits indulgence of the desire for rich food only to the point of avoiding disease (187d-e). The analogy is invalid, for unless disease is caused only the good love is at work (186b).

*The contribution of Aristophanes*, wild extravaganza though it is, has also some roots in existing mythology and natural philosophy, which

<sup>1</sup> Aesch. fr. 44, Eur. fr. 898, Ar. *Birds* 699-702, Aristotle, *Metaph.* 984b 23 ff. For Emped. see vol. II, 155 ff.; for Love as moral force in the *Purif.* 248f. In the extant fr. he calls it Aphrodite not Eros, though Plut. (*De facie* 927a) speaks of 'friendship, Aphrodite or Eros, as Emped. says'. For the Orphic Eros see Guthrie, *G. and G.* 319, *OGR* ch. 4. I should add that neither Aeschylus, Aristophanes nor Empedocles, whom I have introduced as background, is mentioned by Eryximachus, but only Heraclitus, as to whom see vol. I, 435-7.

<sup>2</sup> E.'s speech has been thought of as a parody of Hippocr. π. διαίτης (Pfleiderer; see Bury xxix n. 2), whereas Edelstein was reminded rather of π. ἀρχ. ἡτρ. See also Rosen 95 f. In this article in *TAPA* 1945 Edelstein has in my view vindicated P.'s portrait of the doctor as no caricature but realistic and sympathetic, though Dover (*JHS* 1966, 49 n. 44) thinks differently. See also Rosen 95 f.



add to its effectiveness as a skit on the erudition of the others, especially Eryximachus. Bisexual beings were not unknown. In Empedocles, 'androgynes' arose with other now extinct creatures at an early stage of the world ordered by Love, and the Orphic god Phanes was bisexual and further resembled the circular men in having genitals 'in the rear on the rump'. By Plato's time the cult of Hermaphroditos was probably known at Athens.<sup>1</sup> Bisexual beings are frequent in Oriental mythologies, and some have sought an Oriental origin for the circular men,<sup>2</sup> but it is not easy to find earlier models for their most striking features: the all-male and all-female doubles as well as the male-female, the duplication of faces and limbs and the cartwheel mode of progression.<sup>3</sup>

The conclusion (one can hardly speak of a *moral* in a comic burlesque) is that sexual love is a natural urge to restore our original dual nature.<sup>4</sup> Its application to love of the same or the other sex seems a little confused. Both should be equally natural, depending on the type of which each of us is a half, save that only love between man and woman can ensure the perpetuation of the race (191c). Yet as examples of this Aristophanes mentions not, as one might expect, married couples, but only adulterers (191d-e), and his highest praise is reserved for male lovers, on the grounds of their courage and statesmanlike qualities. We may take this as a reminder by Plato that the poet is still following his comic Muse (189b), when we remember how in the *Clouds* the political success of homosexuals is referred to as the knock-out blow of the Unjust Argument. The terms applied to them there are not complimentary.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Emp. fr. 61, 3f. (vol. II, 203-5). For Phanes and Hermaphroditos, Guthrie, *OGR* 101 and 145 nn. 24 and 25.

<sup>2</sup> Some refl. in Friedländer, *Pl.* I, 369 n. 11 and Gould, *PL* 191 n. 41. W. Koster in ch. v of his *Mythe de P.* etc. considers and rejects an oriental origin for the Aristophanes myth, and Wilamowitz, *Pl.* I, 372 championed its purely Greek origin. For stories of the origin of sexual love in 'many different cultures' see refl. in Dover, *JHS* 1966, 42 n. 8. The allusions to Empedocles (which Dover denies, p. 46) are not only to the androgynes but to his seriously-held view that the potency of Love is universal, not confined to sentient beings.

<sup>3</sup> The nearest to A.'s double men in Greek mythology are the sons of Actor and Molione as described by Hesiod (fr. 18 Merk.-West) and Ibycus (fr. 2 Diehl).

<sup>4</sup> The perfection of love is reached when we meet not merely one of the right sex, but actually our own other half. How the present generation can contain matching halves, when the dichotomy took place in the prehistoric past, it would be unfair to ask.

<sup>5</sup> *Clouds* 1089-92. Attention was drawn to this passage by Dover, *JHS* 1966, 45. The words used are εὐρύπρωκτοι and δημηγορεῖν.

## The Symposium

*Agathon* lives up to his reputation as a poet<sup>1</sup> (the most amusing touch in his speech being the ingenious arguments to show that Eros possesses all the virtues), and only *Socrates* remains. He is allowed a brief exercise of his own dialectical method to establish the preliminary point that *Agathon* was wrong because Eros stands for desire itself and not its object, and then throws his own speech into the form of a conversation between himself and a wise woman, *Diotima*. Whether or not anyone of the name existed, she is here simply a double of the Platonic *Socrates*, while he himself takes the part of a *Charmides* or *Lysis*.<sup>2</sup> The question-and-answer method is *her* speciality! (201e.) This fiction enables him, first, to keep up the pretence of Socratic ignorance, like the imaginary boorish relative in the *Hippias Major* or *Aspasia* in the *Menexenus* (who scolds *Socrates* as does *Diotima* at 207c). Secondly it enables him to retain the dialogue form while nominally adhering to the rules of the symposium.<sup>3</sup>

Leaving aside the poetry and religious fervour of *Diotima's* message (which though integral and essential to it must be sought in Plato's own words), it amounts to an extension, in the light of the developed doctrine of Forms, of two points made earlier in the *Lysis*. First, the loving or desiring subject is an 'in-between', neither good nor bad,

<sup>1</sup> For contrasting aesthetic judgements on his speech, see Taylor, *PMW* 221, and Grube, *P.'s Th.* 100.

<sup>2</sup> Some regard the mention of her postponement of the plague at Athens (201d) as evidence of historicity, e.g. Bolte in *RE* xxviii. Halbb. 1321, Taylor, *PMW* 224, and see Friedlander, *Pl.* 1, 365 n. 14. Kranz (*Hermes* 1926) believed her historical, but thought the question of no importance for understanding the *Symp.* Robin (Budé ed. xxii-xxvii) argued against Taylor, and Bury (xxxix) also thought her fictitious. Another Socratic trick is her assumption of agreement by the interlocutor, to his own astonishment: neither she *nor he* thinks Eros a god. (Cf. *Gorg.* 466e.) Also, she has apparently listened to Aristophanes's speech (205d). I cannot support the opinions of Wilamowitz (*Pl.* 1, 380) and Neumann (*AJP* 1950) that D.'s teaching is not Socratic but in fact a kind of sophistic with no absolute worth, tempting though it may be to find such an easy way out of a difficulty like that of her views on immortality. ὥσπερ οἱ τέλει σοφισταί at 208c simply gives the effect of 'like a real schoolmistress' (or perhaps 'a finished orator'; cf. *Crat.* 403e), implying nothing about the content of her teaching. S. himself, of course, is never didactic, but he can report the lessons of someone else! See also vol. III, 31.

<sup>3</sup> These seem sufficient reasons for D.'s presence. Some, like Cornford (*U. Ph.* 71), allege courtesy to *Agathon*, but if, as he says, she was an 'invention', the company would know, and the courtesy be somewhat hollow. Of course some entire dialogues are, in form, continuous narrations by S.

as instanced by the philo-sopher, who, desiring wisdom, must be neither wise nor so ignorant and stupid as not to recognize its worth (*Lys.* 217e-218b, pp. 141, 149 above). Once again we are told that the worst sort of ignorance is to think yourself wise when you are not (204a; and yet there are some who still think that Diotima is other than Socrates himself!). Eros, then, at his best is a philosopher, for he represents love of beauty, and wisdom is most beautiful (*Symp.* 203d7, 204a-b). Secondly, the 'primary object of love', for whose sake all else is desirable (*Lys.* 219c-d, pp. 151f. above), has shed its ambiguous status and emerged as the transcendent Form of Beauty, the final revelation of the mysteries of Love.

*Eros is in every way intermediate*, between beautiful and ugly, good and bad, wise and foolish,<sup>1</sup> and between mortals and immortals he is also *intermediary*. That gods do not have direct contact with men is scarcely a general, certainly not a Homeric, Greek belief, but consistent with Plato's reservation of converse with the gods in the *Phaedo* to the happy souls living on the true surface of the earth (p. 336 above). As the state between ignorance and wisdom, Plato again mentions true *doxa* (belief, judgement or guessing), which still, as in the *Meno* (pp. 261ff. above), 'hits on reality' (202a) though unlike knowledge it cannot 'render an account'. In the *Republic* knowledge and *doxa* appear to differ in their actual objects, not simply in their mode of apprehension, and this apparent inconsistency is something to keep in mind. (We return to it on pp. 489ff. below.)

The idea that we only value something as 'belonging' to us in so far as it is *good* (205d-e) is a favourite with Plato. In the *Charmides* it is attributed to Critias, but *Lys.* 222a, c-d with *Rep.* 586e show it to have been Plato's own. In full, we desire what naturally belongs to us, and that is the good, for 'no one desires evil' (*Meno* 78a-b).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For 'in between' and 'other than' in P. and his commentators, here and in *Prot.* and *Gorg.*, see pp. 224-6 above; for the contemporary philosophical importance of the distinction, p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> *Charm.* 163c (where S.'s slighting reply may suggest that here too P. has taken over a Sophistic cliché to raise it to a different level), p. 159 with n. 4 above. For *Meno* see pp. 246f.

## The Symposium

*Spiritual pregnancy and parturition.* Diotima's references to intercourse, pregnancy and birth sit very lightly to the facts of nature. 'Bringing forth in beauty' (206b) is sometimes passed by without comment, sometimes taken to mean begetting on beauty as the male on the female;<sup>1</sup> but Beauty's role is that of Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth who gives easy delivery (206d). Pregnancy is not the *result* of love excited by the beautiful, but a universal state which *causes* excitement at an encounter with beauty (206d). The young man seeks beautiful bodies and souls because *already* pregnant in his own soul (209b).<sup>2</sup> Then 'in contact and association with the beautiful he brings to birth what he has long been pregnant with'. This universal pregnancy stands for a longing to bear offspring, whether of body or mind. Every adult is potentially a creator, of children or great deeds or ideas, and unless he becomes so in reality, feels baffled and unfulfilled. Beauty provides the environment in which delivery can take place. In another dialogue it is Socrates himself who assists, as midwife, the delivery of other men's thoughts.<sup>3</sup> Plato saw both the Eros which is philosophy, and the Beauty which it seeks and which will help it through its pangs, summed up in a person.

*Immortality.* In this part of her speech Diotima claims that the ultimate impulse behind erotic desire is the natural mortal longing for immortality, which can never be literally satisfied. Has Plato then given up (or perhaps not yet reached) the belief in immortality which is one of the keystones of his mature philosophy? Has he become an Aristotelian? Aristotle's view is astonishingly like Diotima's (*De an.*

<sup>1</sup> So Joyce, 'to bring forth *upon* the beautiful'. Bury's 'in the sphere of the beautiful' (xlili) is comfortably vague. Better Bluck, *Ph.* 4, 'in a medium of beauty'.  $\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$   $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  does mean to impregnate in Aristoph.'s speech (191 c), though the preceding  $\epsilon\lambda\varsigma$  is commoner. LSJ's examples suggest that neither  $\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$   $\acute{\epsilon}\nu$  nor  $\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\acute{\iota}\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\nu$  is commonly used with this meaning.

<sup>2</sup> If the sentence 206c5-6 is genuine, D. does refer once to literal conception as the result of coition between man and woman, but many edd. from Ast to Bury have rejected it. In any case it is 'men pregnant in body' who are attracted to women, and for the most part  $\kappa\upsilon\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$  refers to males and their mental pregnancy. See further on this Morrison, *CQ* 1964, 51-5.

<sup>3</sup> Being himself barren. See *Theaet.* 150c-d (vol. III, 444). One should not say with Bury (xxxviii) that S. 'deposits the fruits of his pregnant mind' in Agathon's soul. He has, he would claim, only asked questions, thereby eliciting, as he did from Meno's slave, truths with which Agathon's mind was already pregnant. Alcibiades takes him at his word (216d): 'he is utterly ignorant and knows nothing'.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

415a26ff., repeated in *GA* 731b31-5):<sup>1</sup> to reproduce their kind is natural to all living things

that they may partake as far as possible in the everlasting and divine... Since they cannot do this by actual continuity (for nothing perishable can remain one and the same), each partakes in it so far as it can, some more some less; it persists not as itself but in something *like* itself, specifically one though not numerically.

Plato's words are (208a7):

In this way everything mortal is perpetuated, not like the divine by being in every way the same, but by leaving behind, as it wastes away and grows old, a new being such as it was itself. By this device mortal partakes of immortality, both corporeally and in other ways; but it is otherwise with the immortal.<sup>2</sup>

On the face of it this passage seems to deny the immortality of the soul of which Socrates is persuaded in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, and Hackforth maintained that the *Symposium* shows 'a lapse into temporary scepticism' on Plato's part.<sup>3</sup> He pointed out that when immortality is defended in presumably later works (*Rep.* 10, *Phaedrus*, *Laws* 10) it is by quite different arguments, suggesting that those in the *Phaedo* had ceased to satisfy him.

The majority who think differently point (rightly in my view) to the contrast, certainly a Platonic one, between immortality in time (everlastingness) and eternal life.<sup>4</sup> Most men can only conceive of the

<sup>1</sup> It does not do to say (with e.g. Wipern) that even for Aristotle, though the rest of *psyche* as the 'form' of the body was inseparable from it, *nous* was still immortal and divine (*De an.* 413b24 and bk 3, chh. 4 and 5, *GA* 736b27f.), for the immortal part seems to be something completely impersonal. Ar. had no use for doctrines of individual survival, *anamnesis* and reincarnation.

<sup>2</sup> The last clause in the MSS and *Oxy. Pap.* 843 is ἀθάνατον δὲ ἄλλη. Bury and Burnet (not Robin) adopt Creuzer's emendation ἀδύνατον. In either case it means that the mortal cannot put on immortality as the immortal (i.e. divine) does.

<sup>3</sup> Hackforth in *CR* 1950. Morrison (*CQ* 1964) agreed with the fact, but accounted for it by supposing that *Symp.* was written much earlier than is generally thought. It shares, he thinks, the 'cheerful humanism' of the *Prot.*, a judgement difficult to reconcile with Diotima's speech. See also Crombie, *EPD* 1, 361-3. Hackforth was answered by Luce in *CR* 1952. Wilamowitz, Gomperz, Gaye, Shorey, Bury, Robin, Taylor, Bluck, Wipern, and, I believe, everybody else, have taken *Symp.* to presuppose immortality in the *Phaedo* sense. See especially Bluck's additions to Luce's arguments, *Phaedo* 28 n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> See Luce, *CR* 1952, 139 and Cornford *U. Ph.* 75. The distinction between everlasting and timelessly eternal is most clearly made at *Tim.* 37c-38b.

## *The Symposium*

former, which, like the animals, they pursue through physical or spiritual procreation. The philosopher achieves *his* immortality through contact with the divine, eternal Forms. But this contact, vision or knowledge, so graphically described in the *Symposium*, is only reached through *anamnesis* which in turn implies reincarnation and immortality. The doctrine of Forms and the immortality of the soul 'by itself' (αὐτὴ καθ' αὐτήν *Ph.* 79d, i.e. the mind) are inseparable. When Diotima speaks of reproduction as the only means of immortality, and Socrates in the *Phaedo* of our souls as genuinely immortal, they are speaking of different things: the substitute-immortality of the mortal part of us, which is dissolved at death, and the true immortality of our divine *psyche*, that is, reason.<sup>1</sup> The point is made clear in the *Phaedrus* (246c–d). The soul has been declared immortal. It can, however, 'lose its wings', then sinks down and 'takes to itself an earthy body, which seems by reason of the soul's power to move itself. This composite structure of soul and body is called a living being (ζῷον), and is further termed mortal.'

It is commonly overlooked that vicarious immortality is expounded as part of the 'lesser mysteries' of Love. As such, it is sought through physical procreation, ambition for lasting fame, poetic creation, technological inventiveness, and good sense and justice in the political sphere perpetuated in constitutions and other laws (208e–209e). That is, the means to it do not go beyond what in the *Phaedo* is designated 'popular and political virtue', which is not true virtue and is practised for the wrong motives (82a, 68b–69d). As in the *Symposium*, philosophic virtue is there contrasted with it and compared to the state of the fully initiated.<sup>2</sup> Hackforth claimed that even the immortality of the philosopher, when he has received the final initiation and seen the divine Form of Beauty itself, was vicarious like that of others, because it springs 'from the begetting of true virtue (sc. in another's soul)'. This is a point not met by his critics. First, however, the words 'in another's soul' are not in Plato, and Hackforth seems to

<sup>1</sup> See especially Luce, *l.c.* 140 and Wipperfurth, *Synusia* 134.

<sup>2</sup> Neglect of this point vitiates such criticism as that of Gomperz (*GT* II, 394), who declared that a 'chasm yawns' between 'the justification of ambition in this dialogue and its rejection in the *Republic*'. This is part of his case that P. in the *Symp.* 'placed himself in fundamental contradiction to the views expressed both in his earlier and his later works'.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

have misunderstood his double use of the word 'in' in this context of metaphorical pregnancy and birth. He refers to 209c, where however Socrates says that a man pregnant in *his own* soul (209b1), when he converses with a fair youth, brings forth what he has long been pregnant with,<sup>1</sup> and the two cherish it together. Now to translate the relevant passage (211e4–212a7):

Do you think his would be a poor life who gazes thither and beholds *that* [i.e. Beauty itself, pure, bodiless, and divine] with the appropriate faculty<sup>2</sup> and dwells with it? Do you not see that it is in that place alone, seeing Beauty with that by which she may be seen, that he brings forth not phantoms of virtue<sup>3</sup> but true virtue, as his contact is with no phantom but with truth? And he who bears and nurtures true virtue is dear to the gods, and is immortal if any man is. This, Phaedrus and gentlemen, is what Diotima said and I believe, and believing it I try to persuade others too that towards gaining this possession human nature can have no better helper than Eros.

'This possession', I submit, is the immortality to which the philosopher looks forward in the *Phaedo*. Immortality is not the main theme of the *Symposium*, and Plato has no wish to go over the same ground again. One might wonder, for instance, if only the philosopher is immortal, how there can be, as there is in the *Phaedo*, an appropriate fate after death – good, bad or indifferent – for everyone. Plato has not said, but he would never dignify with the title of immortality (which he, like all Greeks,<sup>4</sup> equated with divinity) the continued existence in the wheel of births of a soul not yet purified of the body's weight.<sup>5</sup>

There remains a curious passage in which Diotima seems to

<sup>1</sup> ἡ πάλα ἐκύει τίκει τε καὶ γεννᾷ 209c3. Cf. the next sentence: καὶ πᾶς ἂν δέξαιτο ἑαυτῷ τοιοῦτους παῖδας μᾶλλον γεγενῆσθαι.

<sup>2</sup> I.e. intellect (νοῦς). See the parallel passages in Bury, *ad loc.*

<sup>3</sup> εἰδῶλα ἀρετῆς, i.e. those of the 'lesser mysteries'. Similarly in *Phaedo* popular ἀρετή is contrasted with ἀληθὴς ἀσκησις (69b).

<sup>4</sup> Guthrie, *G. and G.* 115f. This I find the chief obstacle to agreement with Bernhardt's thoughtful interpretation of immortality in the *Symp.* (*P. et le M.A.*, app. 11): it involves supposing that, there and in *Phaedo* as well, not only νοῦς but the whole soul as it functions in bodily life, even (because of transmigration) in animals, is immortal.

<sup>5</sup> As is often pointed out, *Laws* bk 4 (721b–c) also speaks of procreation as the only immortality attainable. Yet in bk 10 of the same work individuals last on to experience *either* terrors in the underworld *or* 'if through intercourse with divine virtue they have become divine', translation to 'somewhere better' (904c–e).

## *The Symposium*

enunciate what Crombie has called a 'Humian conception of a man's self as a succession of mental states'.<sup>1</sup> The problem may be insoluble, but let us see what she says (207d–208a). A man retains his identity throughout life, although not only is he constantly wasting and being renewed in body (as Cebes said in the *Phaedo*, 87d), but even in his personality (*psyche*), his character, habits, views, desires, pleasures, pains and fears never remain the same. Even more surprising (as Diotima calls it and some may agree), in our knowledge too we are never the same. Items of knowledge come and go: we lose them through forgetfulness and regain them through recollection. The first list of characteristics and emotions raises no difficulty, for all belong only to the soul in its embodied state: this is expressly asserted in the *Phaedo* (65d, 66c) of pains and pleasures, desires and fears, and is obviously true of the rest, so that their undeniable mutability has no relevance to the immortal intellect, which, while incarnate, must act to some extent 'with the body' (*Ph.* 66e) but will employ it as little as possible. As for knowledge, forgetfulness and recollection are equally undeniable facts to illustrate the changes in our mental life. We (our *psychai*) forget and remember because association with the body in this life prevents our knowledge from being perfect, and Diotima is talking of living human beings. The *Phaedo* is really the best commentary on this passage (66d):

If we are ever to know anything clearly, we must rid ourselves of the body and with the soul itself contemplate things in themselves. Then, when we are dead, as the argument shows, we shall get what we desire and claim to love, namely wisdom, but not while we live. If we cannot know anything clearly while with the body there are two alternatives: either we can never acquire knowledge or we can acquire it after death, since only then is the soul by itself, apart from the body. While we live, we shall be nearest to knowledge if we have only the minimum possible converse or association with the body – the barest necessity – and keep ourselves pure and uninfected by its nature until God himself releases us. Then in full purity and freed from the body's folly, we shall, we may be sure, join our fellows and know by our own powers the full unadulterated truth.

<sup>1</sup> *EPD* 1, 361–3; cf. II, 23 and 323. The label of a philosopher who lived many centuries later, in a very different climate of thought, is always an invitation to take a second look. For a discussion of the Humian position see Patterson, *P. on I.* 66ff.



## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

Plato (as why should he not?) in different contexts uses 'knowledge' to mean both what we call knowledge in this life, subject to loss and recovery, and the perfect knowledge of the philosophic soul after its release; and *psyche* to mean the soul performing all vital functions (nourishment, reproduction, sensation as well as thought) through the medium of the body which inevitably causes it to suffer and change (πάσχειν), and also the soul (mind) 'itself by itself', the immortal part which (if in this life we have been lovers of wisdom) will escape to its divine kin and have perfect and direct knowledge of (communion with) the Forms. This should not cause difficulty. The one difference between *Phaedo* and *Symposium* is that in the latter Plato is more optimistic: even in this life the philosophic follower of Eros may regain the intellectual vision of the invisible Beauty itself.

*Dialectic and the Forms.* Beauty in the *Symposium* (described in the summary, p. 377 above) is the very paradigm of a Platonic Form, foreshadowed in the *Hippias Major* and enlarged on in the *Republic*. It is what all beautiful particulars share, yet exists also by itself, unaffected by whatever happens to them. Philosophic reasoning must precede its apprehension, which however is an instantaneous act of mental vision *transcending* thought, just as it is not itself a thought or knowledge (211a). The process leading to it is what the *Republic* (e.g. 532a) calls 'dialectic', in which the mind first becomes aware of the shared Forms in sets of particulars, then, discarding the senses, ascends 'by itself' to the grasp of higher (more universal) Forms and ultimately to the vision of the supreme Form of the Good, here represented in its aspect as Beauty, as is appropriate to a symposium on Love.<sup>1</sup> The progress from perception of particulars to apprehension of a Form, here vividly described as progress in Love, is equated with *anamnesis* at *Phaedrus* 249b–c, and so far it is legitimate to supplement one dialogue by another. From the *Phaedrus* we shall learn more about the Form of Beauty and our relation to it.

<sup>1</sup> The two are regarded as interchangeable at 204e (cf. also 201c), and commonly, though not always fairly, equated by P. So *Lys.* 216d, *Prot.* 360b, *Tim.* 87c, *Meno* 77b (where their equation is misleading, see p. 247 n. 1 above and cf. the defeat of Polus, pp. 288f.). I speak here of Forms, but for a different view see Moravcsik, *Reason and Eros* 295.

## The Symposium

'Sublimation'. Since Freud, this word must inevitably occur to a reader of the *Symposium*. Cornford remarked (*U. Ph.* 78) that the ancient and modern doctrines of Eros have been compared<sup>1</sup> and even identified. He himself regarded them as opposed in one essential respect, that the concept of evolution, dominant in modern science and known to earlier Greek thought, was deliberately rejected by Plato. It is true that he is the enemy of any form of reductionism. He would never say that sexuality on a physical level is the most deeply rooted instinct in human nature. We share it with the beasts, and it is a Platonic axiom that what is most truly our own nature is what is *peculiar* to humanity. The soul (mind) is each of us, and the body, essentially alien, the instrument through which we must express ourselves in this temporary state. Freud<sup>2</sup> expressly preferred the Aristophanic view of the erotic instinct as a desire for regress to an earlier state of things.

Nevertheless, to borrow an Aristotelian tag, if in the species perfection is prior, the individual has to start from the bottom. Cornford's view might lead us into the error of Taylor, who called Eros 'a cosmogonic figure whose significance is hopelessly obscured by any identification with the principle of "sex"':<sup>3</sup> Diotima's speech 'has left sexuality far behind'. At its climax of course it has, but even the philosopher can only reach his goal through an appreciation of beauty at its visible, physical level, indeed in a single handsome male body (211c). Only later will he learn to recognize beauty of

<sup>1</sup> He gives no ref. We may mention Dodds, *G. and I.* 218: 'Plato in fact comes very close here to the Freudian concept of libido and sublimation.' There is also S. Nachmansohn, 'Freuds Libidotheorie verglichen m. d. Erotheorie Platons', *Ztschr. f. artzt. Psychoanalyse* 1915. The best full account of Platonic *eros* in the light of the psychological knowledge of its time (1926) is Lagerborg's *Plat. Liebe*, whose theses are summarized by Levinson, *D. of P.* 124f. (n. 129). Levinson's own chapter, though frankly a 'defence', is also well balanced and should be read by everyone who wishes to understand this side of Plato in his historical setting. For Cornford's view see also his article in *Hibbert J.* 1930, 218f.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by T. Gould, *PL* 33f. For the relation between P. and Freud see also pp. 23f.

<sup>3</sup> *PMW* 209. In fact Eros is a cosmogonic figure simply because in early belief the world was produced by sexual generation. Similarly Moravcsik (*Reason and Eros* 289, 291) regards it as impossible for P. to have meant either (a) that 'nobody can appreciate the beauty of mathematics without having appreciated bodily beauty', or (b) that 'one has to overcome one's sexual desire towards one person and direct it towards many'. So difficult is it (as I mentioned at the beginning) for a modern man to understand what philosophical *eros* meant to P.: (b) he expressly states at 210a-b. In general M.'s is an article curiously out of touch with the mood of the *Symp.* See also Rosen 225 n. 79 and 265 n. 143.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

soul in a less favoured frame (210b). We shall be told in the *Phaedrus* that active indulgence of desire at the lowest level hampers the ascent; Plato never approves of homosexual intercourse. But the ascent is still described as 'a right use of boy-love' (τὸ ὀρθῶς παιδεραστᾶν 211b), and the explaining away of the barrenness of pederasty at 209c as fecundity in children worthier than those produced by marriage of man and woman (which will in any case not be to everybody's taste) is in striking contrast to the violent condemnation of it in the *Laws* as deliberate murder of the human race. (At *Phaedrus* 251a it is 'an unnatural pleasure'.) Yet the message of the two works is essentially the same. The 'third type of lover' in the *Laws* is surely the philosophic lover of the *Symposium* – in fact, for Plato, Socrates himself.

There is a third category, compounded of the other two. The first problem is to discover what this third kind of lover is really after. There is the further difficulty that he himself is confused and torn between two opposing instincts; the one tells him to enjoy his beloved, the other forbids him. The lover of the body, hungry for his partner who is ripe to be enjoyed, like a luscious fruit, tells himself to have his fill, without showing any consideration for his beloved's character and disposition. But in another case physical desire will count for very little and the lover will be content to gaze upon his beloved without lusting for him – a mature and genuine desire of soul for soul. That body should sate itself with body he'll think outrageous; his reverence and respect for self control, courage, high principles and good judgement will make him want to lead a life of purity, chaste lover with chaste beloved. The combination of the first two is the 'third' love we enumerated a moment ago.<sup>1</sup>

There are many indications that Socrates belonged to the 'mixed' type, and did not rise without a struggle from the popular to the philosophic Eros;<sup>2</sup> but the progress becomes easier as it continues, for as Diotima hints and the *Republic* asserts, when the stream of Eros is channelled in one direction its force is lessened in others.<sup>3</sup> For this progress 'sublimation' is a temptingly convenient term,

<sup>1</sup> *Laws* 838e and 837b–d (trans. Saunders with one small alteration).

<sup>2</sup> See vol. III, 393–8, especially the quotation from *Charm.* and the story of Zopyrus (pp. 394 and 397).

<sup>3</sup> *Rep.* 485d. Cf. Cornford, *U. Ph.* 72f.

## *The Symposium*

provided we understand the different philosophical backgrounds against which it is being used: the purification of Eros is achieved by conscious effort, whereas Freudian sublimation is an unconscious re-channelling of unconscious (because repressed) impulses. But how much Freud had in common with at least the Lesser Mysteries appears from this sentence about his teaching: 'The world of cultural achievement is won only by denying to the instincts the direct gratifications which they seek and by using the energy so released in sublimated forms for the tasks of art and science.'<sup>1</sup>

*Alcibiades.* When Alcibiades knew Socrates (some twenty years his senior), the internal conflict was long over, and Socrates could talk to him as he does in Plato's *First Alcibiades* and exhibit the super-human self-control which Alcibiades so shamelessly and inimitably describes here. Diotima's last words were that the man who has seen Beauty itself, 'having brought forth and nurtured true goodness, will have the privilege of being beloved of God, and becoming, if ever a man can, immortal himself' (trans. Hamilton). This lofty conclusion is the climax of the whole work, and a lesser writer might have made it the end. But Plato will not have us forget that we are at a party. The convivial is as important as the serious, and any difference of emphasis between the treatment of sex here and in the *Laws* is fully accounted for by the fact that in the latter three elderly gentlemen are solemnly discussing legislation in the middle of the day, whereas the theme of these after-dinner improvisations over the wine bowl is the praise of Love. We are not to remain on the heights of philosophy, and the sudden appearance of Alcibiades swaying and shouting in the doorway effectively brings us back to earth. His way of complying with the rule of the house is to offer an encomium on Socrates instead of Eros. The meaning is plain. He is not evading the rule, for Eros is made visible in Socrates, the daemonic<sup>2</sup> figure not to be compared to any other man who ever lived, but only to the demigods (221d). The greatest Socratic paradox is Socrates himself: the ideal statesman

<sup>1</sup> A. MacIntyre, art. 'Freud' in *Ency. Phil.* III, 251.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 203a, the δαιμόνιος ἄνθρωπος who is σοφός in the art of bringing man and god into communication.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

who took no part in public life (*Gorg.* 521d), the embodiment of Love who is proof against all sexual temptation, the ugly satyr who is 'divine and golden, beautiful and wonderful' within.

### (3) THE PHAEDRUS

*Date.*<sup>1</sup> The opinion that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's earliest work was expressed in ancient times and survived into the nineteenth century. In both periods it was mainly based on the supposed youthful freshness of subject and treatment and lyricism of style. It was even suggested by Pohlenz that in his fifties Plato could not have written of sensual passion as he did! Nowadays it is placed fairly late in the middle period. Most would say it was written after the *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Republic*, a few after the *Parmenides* and *Theaetetus* or even the *Sophist*. Stylometric evidence is said to have 'cumulative weight' (de Vries 11, i.e. in favour of a fairly late date), but must surely face peculiar difficulties in a work containing a speech allegedly (and perhaps actually) by the orator Lysias, another in competition with it, and long sections in a highly lyrical vein. 'The *Phaedrus* is out of the general line of Plato's development, and its metre has a logaoedic character' (Shewring, *CQ* 1931, 14). As for its philosophy, Plato's refusal to confine one dialogue to a single subject has upset his critics, who do not always see connexions where he did. His enthusiastic talk of love, of the soul and its immortality, of the Forms and *anamnesis* and a place above the heavens would relate the *Phaedrus* closely to *Phaedo* and *Symposium*, but some think that he has introduced a completely new dialectical method which recurs in *Sophist* and *Politicus*, thus putting it firmly, and perhaps even late, in the 'critical' group. It certainly introduces without warning a proof of

<sup>1</sup> For full orientation see Robin, *TPA* 63-109 and Budé ed. ii-ix, Hackforth 3-7, Jowett III, 107 n. 1, de Vries 7-11. (Refs. to Hackforth and de Vries are to their editions of the dialogue.) The ancient testimonies (D.L. 3,38 and Olympiod. *V. Plat.* 3) are quoted by de Vries, 7. In addition note (a) that Levinson in 1953 still championed a fairly early date on the familiar psychological grounds (*D. of P.* 96 n. 48: certain features 'all bespeak a younger and less tranquil psyche' than P.'s when he wrote *Rep.*); (b) that Runciman (*PLE* 3) would put *Phdr.* between *Parm.* and *Theaet.* on the grounds that the former marks P.'s renunciation of the hypothetical method and paves the way for the method of *diairesis*, but cf. p. 431 n. 1 below. Gulley (*PTK* 108) and Robinson (*Essays* 58) follow von Arnim in putting it after the *Theaetetus*.

## *The Phaedrus*

immortality unconnected with those in *Phaedo* or *Republic* and turning up again in the *Laws*. Added to all this, its ostensible subject is rhetoric.<sup>1</sup> Truly, as Stenzel said, 'the brilliant argument of the *Phaedrus* turns to ridicule all our ideas of chronology'. In my own view the novelty of the method of collection and division has been exaggerated, and the *Phaedrus* is much more in the spirit of the middle group than of the *Sophist*. (Cf. pp. 430f. below.)

*Time, place and characters.* If we wish to press Plato on the date of the conversation, a number of facts must be taken into account which are not easy to reconcile.<sup>2</sup> But in view of the magical air of unreality which is shed over this ideal summer's day, we may be content to place it, with Robin, 'en dehors de toute histoire'. Not that this applies to the scene of the conversation. 'The spot in question', said Thompson in 1868 (p. 9), 'is easily discovered by the visitor at the present day; there is indeed but one place answering the conditions, and it answers them perfectly'; and Robin accompanies the dialogue with an archaeological description and sketch-map, while admitting that the neighbourhood is sadly changed (ed., x-xii). To its ideal character we shall return later. Here I will content myself with a quotation from Cornford (*Princ. Sap.* 66f.):

This is the only Socratic dialogue of which the scene is laid in the open country. Socrates remarks that such surroundings are strange to him: he never leaves the city, because fields and trees have nothing to teach him. On this occasion, however, he breaks out in admiration of the trees and grass, the fragrance of the flowering shrubs, and the shrill music of the cicadas. The place, too, is consecrated to Achelous and the nymphs. Socrates gradually falls under its inspiration and speaks in lyrical language, which, as the astonished Phaedrus notes, is very unlike his usual manner. Throughout the dialogue, up to the prayer to Pan at its close, we are not allowed to forget the influences of nature and of inspiration which haunt the spot.

This singularly elaborate and beautiful setting is symbolic. Socrates is taken out of the surroundings which he never left. Within the limits of his dramatic art Plato could not have indicated more clearly that this poetic and inspired Socrates was not known to his habitual companions.

<sup>1</sup> For its relation to other dialogues see also p. 324 above.

<sup>2</sup> For a succinct statement of them all, combine Hackforth 8 with de Vries 7.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

The conversation is a tête-à-tête between Socrates and Phaedrus (whom we have met in the *Symposium*). As Hackforth says, 'Lysias may be regarded as in effect a third character', but we need not here go into details about this famous orator and speech-writer. He died about 379, which might be helpful in dating the dialogue if scholars could make up their minds whether it was written before or after his death.<sup>1</sup> Plato was acquainted with him, for he was the son of Cephalus and brother of Polemarchus, who figure at the beginning of the *Republic*. (Polemarchus is referred to here at 257b.) He is said to have offered Socrates a speech to use at his trial and after his death wrote an *Apology* in answer to the attack of Polycrates. (See p. 75 above and note to [Plut.] *Vitae*, Loeb. ed vol. x, 366f.) On the genuineness of the speech here attributed to him, see p. 433 below.

### *The dialogue*

#### *(Direct dramatic form)*

A preliminary note on its unusual structure may be in place. Phaedrus reads S. an *epideixis* by Lysias on the offensive<sup>2</sup> thesis that a boy should yield to the advances of a cold sensualist rather than to a lover. S. criticizes it as bad rhetoric and offers a better one on the same thesis. Then, warned by his divine voice that he has committed blasphemy, he delivers a palinode in praise of the genuine Love that raises the soul to its true, immortal stature. A slight but charming mythical interlude leads to a general discussion of the nature and aims of rhetoric which occupies over a third of the whole.

S. meets Phaedrus setting out for a walk after sitting all morning indoors listening to Lysias. If S. will come with him, he will tell him what he can remember of L.'s speech; but S. has spotted the

<sup>1</sup> Grote (*Pl.* II, 242), Thompson (*Phdr.* xxvii) and Shorey (*Unity* 72) assumed he was alive, Wilamowitz, Robin and Hackforth (see H., 16 n. 5) that he was dead when P. wrote the *Phaedrus*. The only argument offered for supposing him dead is that the severity of P.'s attack on him makes it probable.

<sup>2</sup> Offensive even to Athenians who approved of pederasty, as Taylor remarked (*PMW* 302). None of the earlier speeches of the *Symp.* sank to this level.

actual text tucked under his cloak, so he has to agree to read it. As they walk along by the Ilissus Ph. remembers that the rape of Oreithyia by Boreas is supposed to have occurred in the neighbourhood, and asks S. if he believes the story. S. replies that he has no time for the fashionable pursuit of allegorizing myths away. He prefers to accept them, and get on with the more immediate business of learning to know himself.

Arrived at the spot, S.'s raptures over its beauty cause Ph. to rally him on behaving more like a tourist than a native. S. agrees that it is only the carrot of a manuscript dangled before his nose that could persuade him to leave the city. His interest is in men, not trees.

*Speech of Lysias (230e-234c).* Lovers repent when passion departs, regretting their material losses and the displeasure of their relatives. The non-lover, having acted prudently, has nothing to regret, and concentrates on pleasing the other. Lovers are sick, they cannot control themselves, and when they come to their senses will regret their folly. Non-lovers, too, offer a much wider choice. As to a boy's reputation, a lover will be much the more indiscreet. If you fear the consequences of an estrangement after all you have sacrificed, the lover is more likely to take offence; indeed his jealousy isolates a boy from his friends, whereas the other likes him to make friends. The lover's infatuation seeks physical satisfaction before he knows the boy's character; he will spoil him with foolish flattery, whereas the sober man can be a friend, not flattering but considering the boy's future good. One should show favours not to the most importunate (we invite our friends to dinner, not beggars), but to those who can make the best return, not to those who will desert when passion wanes, but to friends for life, who will prove their goodness when the bloom of youth is past. The aim must be mutual advantage.<sup>1</sup>

Asked to comment (234c-237b), S. prefers to pass over the matter of the speech, but thinks poorly of its literary merits. Its repetitiousness suggested either carelessness or a need to pad out inadequate material, or perhaps a childish desire to show virtuosity by saying the same

<sup>1</sup> This summary gives only a faint idea of the repetitiousness to which Socrates justly objects.



## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

thing in different ways. Ph. protests, but S. insists that many great writers of the past would support him; in fact somebody must be inspiring him now, for his breast is swelling with a speech no less good. Since he is far too dull-witted to have conceived it himself, he must have heard it all from others, though he has stupidly forgotten whom.<sup>1</sup> Ph. is delighted if S. can give him, from whatever source, a speech better than L.'s and owing nothing to it. Hardly that, says S. One can't argue the same case without going over some of the same ground: it is a matter of composition rather than *inventio*. Anyway he was only joking, and doesn't intend to court ridicule by competing with a professional orator. Ph. will have none of this bashfulness, and 'covering his head to hide his shame', S. begins.

*First speech of Socrates (237b–241d).* The speaker was really a wily lover who *pretended* not to be in love and claimed acceptance on that ground. He said:

We must first define our subject, or we shall be talking at cross-purposes. What is love, and what is its function? 'Desire for beauty' is too wide. What is its *differentia*? There are two ruling forces in us, an inborn desire of pleasures and an acquired judgement of what is best. When they are at odds, then if judgement prevails, it is called self-control (*sophrosynē*), if unreasoning desires, wantonness (or excess, *hybris*). Love is one variety of the latter, and may be defined as unreasoning desire for the pleasure of beauty, overcoming right judgement and, aided by kindred desire, directed towards the beauty of bodies.

Here S. breaks off to remark that some *numen* of the locality must have seized on him to inspire him with such eloquence. But to continue:

Knowing what love is, we can turn to its effects. The lover's sick mind will want to keep his favourite docile and inferior. He will keep him from improving acquaintances and from philosophy, and encourage him in ignorance and sloth. Physically he will want him soft and effeminate, a useless creature from want of exercise. He will regard parents and friends, marriage and a home, as obstacles to his pleasure,

<sup>1</sup> The anonymous informants may take their place beside the relative in *H. Maj.*, Aspasia and Diotima as another of S.'s many disguises. See p. 385 above.

## *The Phaedrus*

and will even grudge the youth possessions, as making him harder to capture. His society is not only harmful but disagreeable, especially considering the difference in their ages. Driven by passion, he will not let the younger man out of his sight or touch, will keep a suspicious watch on him, alternate fulsome praise with reproaches, and in his cups use openly coarse language. When the fit leaves him he runs away, forgetting the fine promises for which the younger man put up with all this. The former favourite pursues him in anger, not realizing that it was his fault in the first place for giving in to someone not in his right mind. The attentions of such a one do not arise from goodwill, but from sheer appetite.

S. ends by breaking into verse, and stops abruptly. The *genius loci* is being all too effective. The advantages of the passionless suitor he will leave to be inferred as simply the other side of the coin. The disappointed Ph. begs him at least to stay till the heat has abated and discuss the speeches, and his divine sign forbids him to leave until he has purified himself with a palinode, like Stesichorus when he had abused Helen.<sup>1</sup> Love is a god, and to call him evil, as he and Lysias have done, is blasphemy.<sup>2</sup> It must be cleansed by another recital in favour of the lover.

*The palinode of Socrates: forms of divine madness (244a-245c).* What has been said about the madness of the lover would only be true if madness were always an evil; but there are divinely given forms of madness which bring the greatest benefits. There is prophecy, of which the frenzied sort, as of the Pythia, Dodona and the Sibyl, is far superior to the rational craft of telling the future from signs and omens. Secondly there is the madness and possession which by means of prayer, worship and purificatory rites can relieve an individual or

<sup>1</sup> For S.'s divine sign, or voice, see vol. III, 402-4. In Stesichorus Howland (*CQ* 1937, 154) and Ryle (*P.'s P.* 268) saw an allusion to Isocr. *Hel.* 64-6, but as Hackforth says (p. 54), a reference to the well known tale was only natural, and the parallel is not all that close. Stesichorus was punished by blindness, and after writing the palinode regained his sight. See de Vries on 243a.

<sup>2</sup> I see no need to excuse S. for calling Eros a god here and a *daimon* in *Symp.* (Hackforth 54f.). There it suited his purpose to make Love an intermediate and intermediary, and he adapted popular mythology accordingly; here he can accept it unaltered. Such playing with the myths was a common literary device, freely employed by the other speakers in *Symp.*

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

family suffering under a curse for some past sin. Third is the madness of the Muses, without which no amount of skill can make a good poet. What we have to show is that love belongs to the divine type of madness, bestowed for the good of both lover and loved. The proof, which will convince the wise, though not the clever,<sup>1</sup> starts from the nature of the soul.

*The nature of the soul (245c–246d).*<sup>2</sup> All soul is immortal, because ever-moving,<sup>3</sup> self-moving and the cause of all other motion. As first cause it is ungenerated and indestructible, otherwise the whole universe would come to a stop. Self-motion is the essence and definition of soul because only a body which has its source of motion in itself is animate ('besouled'). Its nature may be compared to the joint power of a winged pair of horses and their charioteer. Horses and driver of the gods are good and of good stock, but the rest are mixed: one of the horses is good and one bad, giving the driver a hard task. Soul traverses the universe, caring for the inanimate. When complete and winged, it flies aloft, but on losing its wings it drops till it reaches something solid, takes an earthy body and dwells there. Through its power the body seems to move itself, and the two together are called a mortal creature. The term 'immortal' is used improperly: never having seen or adequately conceived of a god, we imagine him as an immortal animal with a soul and body united for ever.

*The journey of gods and souls, and the vision of Reality (246d–248c).* Of all bodily things a wing has most in common with the divine, for it raises what is heavy towards where the gods live. So beauty, wisdom and goodness, which belong to the divine, nourish the soul's plumage, and their contraries weaken and destroy it. The gods and *daimones*

<sup>1</sup> *Deinoi*. On this word see vol. III, 32. They are *deinoi* like the rascally lawyer at *Rep.* 409c.

<sup>2</sup> For the mythical details of the soul's fall, peregrinations and recovery, Plato has relied largely on Pythagorean and Orphic lore, in part by way of Empedocles (vol. II, 251–3). The prologue of *Parmenides* may also be related; see Skemp, *TMPLD* 5 n. 5. Among older writers see Delatte, *Ét. sur la litt.* p. 72 ff. (especially for the chariot-image), Dieterich, *Nekyia* 111 ff.; and for Orphic eschatology Guthrie, *G. and G.* 321–5. Friedlander (*Pl.* I, 193) quotes a striking parallel from the Upanishads.

<sup>3</sup> On the reading (ἀεικίνητον or αὐτοκίνητον) see T. M. Robinson in *Essays* (Anton and Kustas), 346f.

## *The Phaedrus*

go marshalled in eleven companies, each led by one of the twelve gods with Zeus at the head, Hestia remaining at home.<sup>1</sup> Any soul which can may follow them, and within the boundary of heaven see many blessed sights; but on feast days they mount to its very rim, an easy ascent for them, but hard for the others, whose bad, heavy horse struggles to pull them down towards earth. The souls called immortal come right out on to the back of the heaven, and, carried round in its course, gaze on the things outside it.

In that region lies true reality, invisible and intangible, discernible only by reason. The gods, nurtured on reason and pure knowledge, are strengthened and refreshed by the vision of truth, and complete the circuit, seeing on the way Justice itself, and Temperance, Knowledge and the rest – not the knowledge which varies in the various things that *we* call real, but true knowledge of true being. Having feasted on the sight of reality, they return home.

Of the others, the best follow right round with the charioteer's head above the rim, though troubled by the horses and only with difficulty seeing the realities. Others rise and sink, seeing only some of them, and others fail to reach the summit and trample on each other in their efforts. In the struggle many are maimed and their wings broken. They miss the sight of reality and depart to feed on opinion, whereas the pasturage on which the soul's wings thrive grows on the Plain of Truth.

*The fates of souls (248c–249d).* A soul that has followed the gods and seen something of the truth completes the circuit unharmed; but when it can no longer follow and loses the vision, and by some mischance becomes forgetful and inadequate, it sheds its wings and falls to earth. Its first incarnation is as a man, one of nine types depending on how much of the truth it has seen: 1. follower of wisdom, beauty, culture or love;<sup>2</sup> 2. constitutional monarch or leader

<sup>1</sup> Hestia, goddess of hearth and home, was also the earth (Eur. fr. 944), thought of as stationary in the centre of the universe. The twelve gods were those familiar in Athenian cult (Guthrie, *G. and G.* 110–12), though P. perhaps links them here with the signs of the Zodiac. See Koster, *Mythe de P.* etc. ch. 2, v. d. Waerden, *Hermes* 1953, 482, Hackforth 73 f. (but also Wilam., *Pl.* 1, 465).

<sup>2</sup> I.e. philosopher. For philosophy as *μεγίστη μουσική* see *Phaedo* 61a.

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in war; 3. politician, administrator or businessman; 4. athlete, trainer, physician; 5. prophet or authority on ritual; 6. poet or other imitative artist; 7. craftsman or farmer; 8. sophist or demagogue; 9. tyrant.

He who lives a righteous life in his station has a better lot after it, but none returns whence he came for 10,000 years<sup>1</sup> except the philosopher or philosophic lover, who regains his wings if he has chosen the same life three times. The rest are judged and sent underground (for punishment) or somewhere within the heavens and after 1,000 years choose their second life, which may be as beast or man. But a soul which has never seen the truth cannot take human shape, for a man must understand universals, advancing from sensations to a unity embraced by reason, and this is in fact a process of recollection of the sight of reality. So only the philosopher's mind regains its wings, for he uses recollection to become perfected in the mysteries. Others think him mad, not knowing that he is divinely possessed.

*Beauty and the role of Love (249d-257b).* Of all types of divine madness the fourth (love) is the best, when the sight of beauty in this world brings true beauty to mind and the soul's wings begin to grow. It cannot yet rise, but its gaze is upward. Recollection is not easy for all. Some had only a brief glimpse of reality, some have turned to wickedness and forgotten what they once saw. Virtues of the soul like Justice, Self-control and Wisdom are more difficult to discern through their earthly manifestations, but beauty we seize through the sharpest of our senses, sight. The forgetful, when they see its visible namesake, feel no awe, but shamelessly seek to enjoy it physically, but those who have true beauty fresh in mind feel more like worshipping it. The sprouting of their wings produces pain and irritation like an infant's teething, only to be assuaged by sight and touch of the beloved face and form.

Each loves after the manner of the god whom he accompanied on the heavenly journey, and seeks the corresponding human type, whom he tries to mould further in that god's image. Thus a follower of Zeus will seek one who is by nature a philosopher and leader, of Hera a kingly type and so on, and will foster these qualities in him.

<sup>1</sup> On the question what may happen after the 10,000 years, see Bluck in *AJP* 1958.

## *The Phaedrus*

In doing so, he will discover the same traits in himself, and become possessed by his god, while attributing it to the beloved, who will be fired in his turn. So through the madness of love both are made happy, once the beloved is captured.

To see how he is captured we must return to the image of the tripartite soul. When the driver sees the beloved his desire warms the whole soul. Then the good and obedient horse restrains itself for shame, but the bad one, ignoring whip and spur, plunges and struggles to drag them near the boy and remind them of the pleasures of sex. After a desperate battle (described by Plato with unsurpassable imaginative force) he is subdued, and the lover's soul follows the beloved reverently. In his turn the loved one feels a growing affection, as of one good man to another, which leads him to ignore the common opinion that association with a lover is shameful. The strength of this friendship amazes him, and in the end he comes to feel love in return, without recognizing it as such, and his wings too begin to grow. Seeing this, the lover's bad steed wants more. The beloved does not know what he wants, but embraces the lover out of gratitude, and is inclined to gratify him in any way he likes. But the driver and the other horse resist, and if the higher parts of the mind prevail, the life of the pair is happy and harmonious, and at its end they become winged and have won the first of the three rounds of a contest truly Olympic.<sup>1</sup>

If the pair are less philosophical, and in unguarded moments, but rarely, yield to the base horse, they will remain friends, and will leave the body wingless indeed, but eager to be winged, and have their reward. They will not go to the subterranean darkness, for they have begun the way to the place beneath the heavens,<sup>2</sup> but will be happy together, and in due time become winged. Association with a non-lover, on the other hand, contaminated with worldly wisdom and grudgingly offering worldly goods, will give a boy the illiberal outlook which most people praise as virtue, and his soul will then wander mindlessly around and beneath the earth for 9,000 years.

<sup>1</sup> This refers of course to the three earthly lives which philosophic lovers must live (249a). The struggle is 'truly Olympic' because (a) in the Olympic games a wrestler had to win three throws, (b) in this case the prize is a life with the gods.

<sup>2</sup> According to the provisions of 249a for 'the others'.

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The speech ends with a prayer to Eros to forgive the previous one, to foster the art of love in S., and incline Lysias to philosophy that his disciple Phaedrus may no longer hesitate but devote his life to philosophic love.

*Transition: myth of the cicadas (257b–259d).* Phaedrus is all praise, and fears that L. will cut a poor figure if he tries to compete. Anyway he may give up composition, since a politician recently taunted him with being a speech-writer.<sup>1</sup> S. thinks this is not like L., and anyway politicians write speeches and pride themselves on them. There is no fault in writing speeches, only in writing them badly. Suppose they consider what makes a good composition, whether public or private, prose or verse. If the cicadas singing over their heads should catch them nodding off, lulled by the heat and their song, they would have the laugh on them; but if they remain impervious to the siren voices, the cicadas may grant their special boon. The story is that long ago, 'before the Muses', they were men. When the Muses came bringing song, they were so smitten with pleasure that they forgot to eat and drink, and died singing. From them came the race of cicadas, to whom the Muses granted that they might spend all their time singing and never need sustenance, and they report to each Muse severally who holds her in honour. To the eldest, Calliope and Urania, they tell who has honoured them by living a life of philosophy. So it is worth while talking instead of sleeping at noontide.

*Rhetoric and truth (259e–262c).* To open the discussion, S. suggests that the first essential is that a speaker should know the truth about his subject, but Ph. has been told that for an orator the important thing is to know not the truth, but what is generally believed, since that is what will persuade a jury. S. then, by the analogy of recommending a donkey as a horse (vol. III, 212), claims that a speaker who cannot tell good from evil, but studies the beliefs of the masses and encourages them in evil ways, will have a lot to answer for. Rhetoricians

<sup>1</sup> λογογράφος, one who made a living by 'ghosting' speeches for litigants in the courts, whereas a 'rhetor' spoke in his own name (schol. *ad loc.*; see de Vries 182). This L. certainly was, but S. enlarges it to a more general sense.

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might agree that it is better for a man to know the truth, but would claim that even if he does, without their instruction he will never acquire the technique of persuasion. This might be true if rhetoric is a genuine discipline (*technē*), but what if it is only an unmethodical knack?<sup>1</sup>

He proceeds to show that effective speech (in the widest sense: forensic, political or in private discussion) can never be the subject of a genuine discipline, or even achieve its avowed ends, without a knowledge of the truth. Both in the courts and in politics rival speakers aim at making the same actions seem now right or expedient, and now the reverse, just as in philosophy Zeno<sup>2</sup> could make the same things seem like and unlike, one and many, at rest and moving. The only art of speaking (if it is an art) consists in making everything as like everything else as possible, and showing up an opponent's attempts to do so. Deceit is easiest where two things are nearly alike, and to lead someone on, unsuspecting, from one view to its opposite, is easiest if one proceeds by small steps than if by great. So to deceive others and not be taken in himself, a man must understand precisely the degree of resemblance and difference between things;<sup>3</sup> and since one cannot know how much *x* differs from other things without knowing what *x* is, he who has not the truth but chases after beliefs has a ridiculous non-art rather than an art of speech.

*Dialectical method* (262c–269c). The speeches we have just heard may illustrate the point.<sup>4</sup> The meaning of some words is not in dispute,

<sup>1</sup> P. is repeating points made in *Gorg.* There too S. calls rhetoric an empirical knack (462b–c, 463b) and Gorgias lightly assumes, when driven into a corner, that his pupils, if they 'happen not to know' what is truly right and wrong, can learn it from him (460a), though he has previously agreed that an orator cannot *teach* the difference, but only persuade men to an opinion (455a). On parallels with *Gorg.* cf. Friedländer III, 233f. The two dialogues should be read in close connexion.

<sup>2</sup> 'The Eleatic Palamedes', 261d. Friedländer (III, 234f., changing his mind from earlier editions) claimed that this is Parmenides, but since his argument involves denying not only originality but also ingenuity to Zeno, it is not strong.

<sup>3</sup> A familiar Socratic ploy. The man who knows the truth is the best liar (*H. Min.*, p. 193 above), the just man is the best thief (*Rep.* 334a).

<sup>4</sup> S. in fact says they will show how both speakers used a knowledge of the truth to mislead their hearers, but it soon emerges that L. had no idea of the truth and therefore no *technē*, a lack which he also betrayed in other ways. S. himself has of course no rhetorical skill, and his success is attributable to the local deities, or perhaps the cicadas!



that of others is; e.g. the words 'iron' or 'silver' convey the same things to all of us, whereas with 'good' and 'just' we are at logger-heads,<sup>1</sup> with each other and even in our own minds. 'Love' is in the second category, so it was important for Lysias to say at the start what he meant by it. This he did not do, in fact his beginning was really a peroration and in general the speech lacked any logical order; but a speech should be like a living organism with head and feet, beginning, middle and end. S.'s speeches presented contrary theses, both based on the irrationality of love (i.e. its genus). The second analysed it into two species according to origin (human ailment or divine possession), and one of these again into four: prophecy, ecstatic ritual, poetry, and love, each with its patron deity. Though not wholly seriously meant, the speech exemplifies two principles, knowledge of which can enable one to pass from blame to praise: (1) the collection of scattered types under one general form, (2) division of the general form (in this case irrationality) into the species into which it naturally and objectively falls, which in this case enabled us to distinguish two types of activity confounded in the one term 'love'. Those who have this skill, whom he calls dialecticians, earn S.'s profound homage.

Dialectic S. considers the essential basis of both speech and thought, but Ph. replies that, since it is certainly a different art from that which people like Thrasymachus practise and teach, the nature of rhetoric still escapes them. But what else can it be? Plenty, to judge by the handbooks on the subject, and S., with some relish, runs through the elaborate technical devices taught by Tisias, Gorgias, Polus, Protagoras and other masters. He then shows that, like a doctor who has learned how to produce certain states in a patient's body, to administer an emetic or a laxative and so on, but still has no notion when, or for what patients, the several treatments are appropriate, these rhetoricians have mastered the propaedeutic to their art but not the art itself. Lacking dialectic they do not even know what rhetoric is.

*The orator as psychologist* (269c-272b). How then (asks Ph.) can one acquire the art of a true orator and persuader? Like everything else,

<sup>1</sup> The same point at *Alc. I* 111b, with stone and wood as examples.

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it needs a combination of natural talent with knowledge and practice.<sup>1</sup> Lysias and Thrasyarchus are unlikely to show the way to it. All great arts must be rounded off by a raising of the mind through 'cosmological chatter' about nature; Pericles reached the peak of perfection because he could bring to rhetoric, besides his own gifts, what he learned from Anaxagoras about cosmology and the nature of mind. An orator needs a knowledge of mind and character (*psyche*) as much as a doctor does of the body, if either art is to be applied scientifically and not simply empirically, and Hippocrates said that even the body cannot be understood without a knowledge of nature as a whole. To understand, for practical ends, the nature of anything, one must first decide whether it is simple or complex; then consider what it can act on, and by what means, or by what and how it can be acted upon, if simple; and if complex, ask the same question about each part. The orator's object being to work upon the mind, he must grasp its nature in this way, then classify the types of mind and of speech and their affections, account for them, and fit each to each. Some characters will, for certain reasons, respond to one kind of speech, others to another. The orator must grasp this both in theory and by observation, until he can recognize a type and the arguments which will appeal to it, and moreover understand when to speak and when not, and when to use brevity, pathos, attack, or any other of the handbook devices. Only then can he be said to have mastered the *art* of rhetoric.

*No short cut to success (272b-274a).* This seems to Ph. a tremendous task, and S. suggests that, to make sure there is not some short cut to success, they had better return to the point made by the teachers and originating with Tisias, that an orator is not concerned with truth, but only with the probable or persuasive.<sup>2</sup> But this has really been answered already. What appears probable is what *is like* the truth, and the likeness can only be achieved by one who knows the truth. Hence the laborious dialectical process, of learning how to

<sup>1</sup> For the relative roles of natural gifts, teaching and practice as a commonplace of 5th-cent. discussion, see vol. III, 255-7.

<sup>2</sup> For Tisias and the argument from probability see vol. III, 178f.

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divide things into classes and subsume each one under a form, is indispensable for the craftsman in speech. Nor will it be thought excessive when we reflect that it will enable us to speak and act rightly not only towards our fellow-men but also towards the gods, our masters.

*The written and the spoken word* (274b–279b). From technique (though his last sentence shows that to him it is much more than that), S. passes to a different topic, the value and usefulness (or otherwise) of writing in general. When the Egyptian god Theuth claimed that the invention of writing would improve men's memories,<sup>1</sup> King Thamus retorted that on the contrary it would weaken them by teaching men to rely on written reminders, and would give them the appearance of wisdom without the reality. So the writers or readers of manuals are foolish if they suppose written words can do more than remind those who already know what they are about.<sup>2</sup> Books cannot answer questions nor defend themselves under attack, and are read equally by the right and the wrong people. Living speech, of which writing is only the image, goes with knowledge, is written in the soul of the learner, and knows to speak or be silent before the appropriate people.

Therefore the man who knows what is just and fine and good will prefer not to plant his seed in such gardens of Adonis but like a good farmer to wait for a real harvest. When he writes, it will be to refresh his memory in old age, and that of those who come after him, or else as a pastime preferable to other amusements such as drinking parties; a better pastime, certainly, but better still is the serious use of dialectic to sow knowledge in a soul fitted to receive it, through words which can defend themselves and bear seed destined for immortality by reproduction in other characters, and make their

<sup>1</sup> A hit at Gorgias? In his Palamedes (§ 30) the hero claims that he invented writing as 'a tool of memory' (DK vol. ii, 301).

<sup>2</sup> This sounds strange. Surely the handbook (τέχνη) can also *inform* those who do *not* know its subject. I think P. means that the man who knows the truth about rhetoric (who is in fact the dialectician) can be reminded of it even by the inadequacies of the handbook; but one who does not, will get no benefit from it. ('So far as rhetoric is an art, I don't think Lysias or Thrasymachus can show the method of it', 269 d.)

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possessor as happy as a man can be. Those who like Lysias write speeches, or as law-makers become political authors, are wrong if they think their productions of lasting importance or perfect clarity. Not to distinguish between true and seeming justice, goodness, beauty or their contraries deserves reproach, though all the world praise it. The man we would wish to be is the one who knows that no composition in verse or prose (or for that matter spoken just to persuade, without question or teaching) is of serious weight; the best of them merely jog the memory of those who know. Only if written in the soul does teaching about what is just and fine and good attain clarity, completeness and serious import. Only such lessons should be called a man's legitimate offspring – first those that are his own discovery, and secondly such sons or brothers of these as have grown worthily in the minds of others. If however an author of written works composed them with knowledge of the truth, and can defend them by standing up to examination on what he has written, and by what he says demonstrate the inferiority of the written word, he does not deserve a title taken from his writing – speech-writer, law-writer, poet – but one that indicates his serious pursuit, namely philosopher (lover of wisdom). The other titles belong to those who spend all their time polishing and revising literary works, and have nothing more valuable to offer.

Charged to tell Lysias this, Ph. asks: 'But what about your own friend Isocrates?' Well, he is still young, but S. thinks he surpasses Lysias in both natural gifts and temperament. He may well beat all previous writers in his own field, if he sticks to it, and go even further if some divine impulse leads him to be dissatisfied with it, for there is a strain of philosophy in his make-up.

It is now cooler and they leave, after S. has uttered a prayer to Pan and the other gods of the place for inward beauty and outward circumstances to favour it. May he count the wise man rich, and possess no more wealth than befits a sober man. Ph. asks to be associated with the prayer.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

### *Comment*

Plato has his own way of attacking problems which we should separate (but he does not) into ontological, epistemological, psychological, political and so forth. It is to let them arise in the naturally digressive course of actual conversations, appropriately to speakers and occasion – a death-scene, a party, two friends discussing the merits of a literary work. Each dialogue has a life of its own. The nominal subject may be immortality or love, politics or literary criticism (I do not include philosophical method, for at this stage at least that was not to Plato a subject in its own right, but came in by the way as an aid to reaching the truth about whatever the subject was), but in each it will be approached through different eyes, by a different route and with different emphasis, e.g. on the relative status of intellect and sensation. Yet at least through *Meno*, *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* he is really, like his master (p. 379 n. 4 above), ‘saying the same about the same’, only leaving the reader to discover this through the varied talk of his characters – a rewarding process that leads him far deeper into the human mind than any straightforward theoretical exposition.

*Rhetoric and philosophy: the unity of the Phaedrus.* The combination of technical rhetorical instruction with panegyric on love and mythical narration of the fates of souls, has naturally puzzled those anxious to find the real subject and purpose of the *Phaedrus*.<sup>1</sup> Ryle (*P.’s P.* 262) says it was ‘to announce . . . that the Academy was now, despite his *Gorgias*, to go into competition with Isocrates’ school as a school of rhetoric’. Others have thought the same,<sup>2</sup> but the soul borne aloft on wings of love, the procession of the gods and the place above the heavens are odd material for a school prospectus. Certainly the technique of rhetoric is taken considerably more seriously than elsewhere, Plato and Isocrates undoubtedly made rival claims

<sup>1</sup> On the search for a real subject, purpose or *Hauptzweck* cf. the remarks on pp. 130 f. above.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Jowett’s edd., vol. III, 107 n.: ‘It must have been written at a time when P. contemplated the introduction of rhetorical training into the Academy.’

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(pp. 504–8 above), and both aimed at training political experts; but there is more to be said.

I see no real evidence that Plato taught rhetoric. It is not mentioned in Field's excellent chapter on the Academy and its curriculum (*P. and Contemps.* ch. 3), which takes full account of the authorities. Political theory he did teach, but of his own peculiar kind, dependent on knowledge of the absolute, transcendent Good.<sup>1</sup> He himself had turned his back on political activity as impossible for a philosopher in the contemporary situation. The way in which a philosopher might influence the course of government was not by gaining power himself but by being accepted as adviser to those who held it; and this influence would not be exerted through rhetoric, but through personal contact allowing of dialectical argument. The philosopher-kings of the *Republic*, whether or not the world might some day be ready for them, were certainly not intended to operate in contemporary society. This is borne out not only by the dialogues but by what we know of his pupils, whose activity was advisory and legislative rather than executive.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Gorgias* Plato condemned contemporary rhetoric and politics (the two were inseparable) with anger and contempt. Now that crisis is over, and rhetoric is discussed calmly, with detailed knowledge, and ostensibly as something that could be developed into a genuine and worthwhile art. Hence many have thought, like Ryle (*o.c.* 259), that in the *Phaedrus* Plato 'recants' and 'goes back on what he had said in the *Gorgias*'. All he has in fact done is to recover his balance after that emotional experience and deal with rhetoric in the more typical Socratic-Platonic way, not by direct denunciation but by pretending to take it seriously, to find out what it really is and how it may best achieve its aims, only to discover that 'true' rhetoric is philosophy and must employ the methods of Platonic dialectic. It is in fact (as *Phaedrus* saw, 266c) not rhetoric at all as practised, taught, and expounded at Athens, any more than 'true' love is ordinary pederasty

<sup>1</sup> If, as some good scholars have thought (e.g. Joseph, *K. and G.* 4, Burnet, *Platonism* 102, apparently forgetting that he had denied it on p. 46), the curriculum of *Rep.* 6 and 7 represents that of the Academy, the question is settled.

<sup>2</sup> For contemporary society as not prepared for philosophic rulers, see *Rep.* 489a–b; for the activities of P.'s pupils, p. 23 above. Pytho and Heraclides were exceptional, if Plut. was right to call them Academics (*Adv. Col.* 1126c).

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

or 'true' statesmanship reflected in the activities of a Pericles or Cimon. Rightly understood, all are forms or guises of philosophy and depend on a grasp of the principles of knowledge.

Consider the following points. A speaker must know the *essence* (οὐσία) of the topic on which he speaks (237b-c). He must know the truth about his subject (259e). If it is argued that, aiming simply at persuasion, he need only know what is *believed* about it, we reply that he would then be (a) wicked (260c-d), (b) not craftsmanlike (τεχνικός 262b-c), (c) unsuccessful in his purpose of deceiving (262a). Without the truth there can be no genuine *technē* (260e). Only the trained philosopher is an adequate speaker (261a). Dialectic, said by Socrates to be essential for a speaker, is denied to be rhetoric as ordinarily understood and taught (266c). Since rhetoricians, after learning all that is in their handbooks, are still ignorant of dialectic, they do not even know what rhetoric is (269b), nor can instructors like Lysias and Thrasymachus (two of the more famous orators and teachers of their day) show the way to it (269d). Finally the genuine art of rhetoric (i.e. dialectic) is worth acquiring because it will enable us not only to deal with our fellows but both to speak and to act in a manner pleasing to the gods (273a).

Is this a lesson on how to win over the Athenian *demos* or one's five hundred fellow jurymen? It is more likely to lead, as Socrates foresaw it would lead him, the 'one true master of the political art', to prison and death (*Gorg.* 521c-d). Far from recanting, Plato conceives the true orator exactly as he did in the *Gorgias*:

Then the good orator, being also a man of expert knowledge, will have these ends in view in any speech or action by which he seeks to influence the souls of men... his attention will be wholly concentrated on bringing righteousness and moderation and every other virtue to birth in the souls of his fellow-citizens, and on removing their opposites, unrighteousness and excess and vice.<sup>1</sup>

Of course Plato knew all about what was to him the pseudo-art of rhetoric. Not for nothing had his master spent hours of discussion

<sup>1</sup> 504d, trans. Hamilton. No English version can properly convey the force of the words δ τεχνικός τε καὶ ἀγαθός in bringing out the point that for S. the 'good orator' (i.e. master of the technique of his art) is also a good man.

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with Gorgias, Polus, Thrasymachus and the rest, and he too had all the wrinkles of the handbooks at his fingertips. To justify his low opinion of them he must show that it was not due either to ignorance or to the inability of his Socrates to outshine them in practice. So we have our three speeches: one of Lysias, shown to be open to scathing criticism on purely rhetorical grounds of expression and arrangement (234e–235b, 264a–e); one of Socrates as a model exposition of the same plea; then, after castigation of the plea itself on moral grounds, an example of ‘true rhetoric’, which is nothing less than a soaring philosophical flight revealing what truth is, where it is to be found, and the effect of its discovery on the potentially immortal soul of a true lover. And the dialogue is so composed that when we return to assess the rhetoricians and their teaching on a more mundane level, we have already listened to the words of true oratory and have them ringing in our ears. We start with the need for a sense of *kairos* – of when and before what audiences this or that school device will be effective – of which Gorgias could thoroughly approve.<sup>1</sup> To fit the speech to the hearer demands a thorough knowledge of the *psyche* and its varieties. This sounds like sensible practical advice to a young politician or advocate, but with the words of divine philosophy still echoing in our minds we notice things that might otherwise have escaped us. What Socrates says is (271a–b):

Obviously then Thrasymachus and anyone else who seriously imparts the art of rhetoric will first of all describe the *psyche* with the utmost accuracy, and make his pupil see whether it is one and uniform or like the body complex. This is what we call demonstrating its nature. Secondly he will show what it naturally affects, and how, or by what it can be affected. Thirdly, having classified the types of speech and of soul and the ways in which the kinds of soul are affected, he will expound all the reasons, fitting each kind of speech to each kind of soul, and teaching through what sort of speeches and from what cause a soul of a particular kind will be persuaded, and another will not.

Obviously Thrasymachus will do nothing of the kind. To recommend ‘paying attention to the individuality of the person one was trying to persuade’ may be good empirical, Protagorean advice;<sup>2</sup> but

<sup>1</sup> See vol. III, 272.

<sup>2</sup> And was so taken by Stenzel, from whom the quotation comes (*PMD* 21).



what Socrates is in fact describing is philosophical method, not rhetorical. (a) The method itself is the (Platonic) dialectical one of bringing together under one head and then dividing into kinds:<sup>1</sup> first determine the generic nature of *psyche*, then learn to recognize its several varieties. (b) It could not possibly be practised by an orator addressing the Assembly or an Athenian court: in an audience of hundreds or thousands every psychological type will be represented. The best example of the method is the Platonic dialogue. Socrates knows his interlocutors and skilfully adapts his approach to Charmides, Protagoras, Meno, Gorgias, Callicles or Phaedrus. Moreover ability to 'expound all the reasons' is what in the *Meno* converted belief into knowledge (p. 261 above). A finished orator must have knowledge, and not 'go chasing after beliefs'.<sup>2</sup> This directly contradicts rhetorical teaching, as exemplified in Plato's time by Isocrates who wrote that as a guide in practical matters knowledge was unattainable, and the wise man would rely on belief.<sup>3</sup> Above all, a 'description of the nature of the *psyche*', its actions and experiences, is what we have just been given. It starts with the statement that it is immortal, and the rest flows from that.

We are in fact being faced once more, as in the *Gorgias* (500c), with the choice of lives, the life of 'speaking in the Assembly, studying rhetoric, and engaging in politics as you now practise them', and the life of philosophy. With them go the two standards of *aretē*, conventional and philosophic, as described in the *Phaedo* (pp. 234, 341 above). The lower reappears in the *Phaedrus* itself as 'the illiberality praised by the many as *aretē*', which is inculcated by the non-lover (256e). We cannot now be misled when Socrates claims

<sup>1</sup> See Thompson's note, p. 127 col. 2. Whether Aristotle (who certainly had practising orators in view) constructed his own *Rhet.* on this 'ground-plan of an ideal philosophical rhetoric' (*ib.* col. 1), or as Ross has it (*Arist.* 271 n. 1), 'A.'s conception of rhetoric owes much to P.'s definition of it as a philosophical science founded on dialectic and psychology', is a large question to which the answer has perhaps been too easily assumed. I do not think it need affect the view here taken of P. himself.

<sup>2</sup> δόξας θηρεύειν 262c. He is of course the philosopher. Only those souls whose wings are broken must be content with τροφή δόξαστή (248b, p. 403 above). The contrast between knowledge and opinion, already encountered in *Meno* and *Symp.* (pp. 261-4, 306 above), will be discussed in connexion with *Rep.*, pp. 489-93 below. It recurs here at 253d, where the good horse (in contrast to the driver) is ἀληθινῆς δόξης ἑταῖρος.

<sup>3</sup> *Antid.* 271, p. 311 above. Pp. 308-11 have more about the contrast between P.'s and I.'s conceptions of φιλοσοφία.

## *The Phaedrus*

that his whole aim is to improve rhetoric by turning it from a hit-and-miss empiricism into an art (*technē*) and so help it to achieve its own purpose. Exactly the same language is used in the *Gorgias* (500e–501b, 502d–e): the distinction between philosophy, aiming at the good of the soul, and rhetoric which seeks only to titillate it with pleasure, is expressed as that between a *technē* and an unscientific knack, ignorant even of the causes of what it seeks to produce. Socrates may say towards the end of the *Phaedrus* that he is only showing Lysias and others a better rhetorical method, but his prayer for him has been that he be converted to philosophy (257b). Contemporary rhetoric relied on acceptance of the fact that all human action is motivated by the desire for pleasure, gain or honour (Isocr. *Antid.* 217). This was not the way of the Platonic Socrates.

*Divine madness and its forms.* Dialectical method, whether by example or precept, permeates both the mythical and non-mythical parts of this skilfully woven dialogue. Madness is first divided into two, then the relevant half into four, as preliminary to defining the madness of the lover.

Plato has elsewhere called poets and prophets inspired, but with more or less obvious irony: their divine afflatus explains the fact that they do not know what they are saying, and in this they are on a level with politicians.<sup>1</sup> Here they are said without irony to be far superior to writers or diviners who rely on human techniques alone.<sup>2</sup> We have seen something of Plato's attitude to poetry in connexion with the *Ion* (pp. 204–11 above). His objection was to the poet's claim to *knowledge*, to the contemporary fact that, both in his own eyes and in those of his hearers, the poet was an educator in morals and all sorts of practical arts. If only he and others would admit the influence on him of divine frenzy, which debars him from understanding, they

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.* 22b–c, *Meno* 99c–d, pp. 261f. above.

<sup>2</sup> For the distinction between sane and ecstatic prophecy see Guthrie, *OGR* 67 or *G. and G.* 199. It was not confined to Greece. Rowley in *MRK*, ed. Hooke, 246, gives evidence of it in Babylonia. We need not doubt P.'s belief in divination. Cf. *Tim.* 71e οὐδεις γὰρ ἐννοῦς ἐφάπτεται μαντικῆς ἐνθέου καὶ ἀληθοῦς, and Cornford, *P.'s C.* 289, Bouché-Leclercq, *Hist. de Div.* 1, 50.

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could enjoy the artless outpourings of his 'tender, pure<sup>1</sup> soul' without harm. It does seem that, as the influence of Socrates recedes, Plato is giving more rein to the poetic side of his own nature; and we must also remember that each dialogue is a separate work of art with its own scene and atmosphere. The motif of inspiration pervades the *Phaedrus* from the first moment when Socrates falls under the spell of his environment and the divinities of its little shrines (230b). Nevertheless the inspired poet must still take rank well below the philosopher, for the divinely mad, though mouthpieces for truth, can have no knowledge or understanding of their own activities. Only with that can a man become a 'true' poet and like the true statesman, orator or lover, a philosopher himself. The demand is made of the poet in the *Republic*, book 10.

The next type of divine madness, attributed to Dionysus and only to be described by its Greek name *telestic* (265b), was of great importance to Plato as a symbol (and perhaps more than a symbol) of philosophy. The connexion is emphasized most frequently in the *Phaedo* (pp. 338-40 above), but here too the philosopher 'has been initiated into the complete mysteries and alone become truly perfect' (249c).<sup>2</sup> The promise of the *teletai* was immortality, and Plato was the hierophant who promised immortality to his own initiates, the philosophers. The philosopher is the 'true' Bacchos (see p. 338), and even Alcibiades, the type of the young man with philosophical insight who was seduced by the plaudits of the crowd, was made aware through Socrates of the philosopher's 'mad and bacchic state' (*Symp.* 218b).

Last comes the madness of the lover, that is, for Plato, the philosopher. That love is a god-sent madness was of course not his invention, though Sophocles would hardly have recognized in Plato's his own 'invincible Eros' who 'distracts men's minds to wickedness and harm'.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ἄβρατος, lit. 'untrodden'. Verdenius (*AGPh* 1962, 133) claims it meant 'simply that', but this is not so. It had the derived sense of 'holy', 'sacred', because sacred places were ἄβρατα (as also ἄδυστα 'not to be entered') to preserve their purity. Cf. ἄβρατον ἱερὸν at *Laches* 183b, and other exx. in LSJ.

<sup>2</sup> The associations of the Greek are untranslatable: *teleos* is 'complete, perfect', *teloumenos* is both 'being made complete' and 'undergoing initiation into the *teletai*' (p. 338 with n. 2 above).

<sup>3</sup> *Soph. Ant.* 781, 790-2. Cf. fr. 855.4, on Aphrodite.

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It is in fact a remarkably complex experience. In an early book of the *Republic* (403 a–b) the pleasure of love is condemned precisely because it is manic, and contrasted with ‘right’ loving which ‘can have nothing to do with the manic’ but is ‘disciplined and intelligent love of the orderly and beautiful’. Yet the god-maddened lovers of the *Phaedrus* too, if the better parts of the soul win the struggle over the lower, are ‘self-controlled and orderly’.<sup>1</sup> The *Republic*, in the first mention of love as manic, uses the word (τὰ ἀφροδίσια) commonly meaning sexual intercourse (which it expressly forbids), and *eros* only for the non-manic. The madness it condemns is the ‘left-hand’ madness of the *Phaedrus* dichotomy, arising from human ailment, not divine intervention (265 a). Yet both had the same origin, which we must not try to conceal. As Grote rightly said: ‘Personal beauty (this is the remarkable doctrine of Plato in the *Phaedrus*) is the main point of visible resemblance between the world of sense and the world of Ideas... This was the first stage through which every philosopher must pass.’<sup>2</sup> This ‘remarkable doctrine’ springs to life under Plato’s hands when we are shown the startling effect on Socrates of Charmides’s beauty, and his resistance to Alcibiades in spite of his susceptibility.<sup>3</sup>

*Nature and functions of the soul.* ‘All soul is immortal’ (245 c).<sup>4</sup> This is confirmed by a new argument (assuming the generally accepted priority of *Phaedo* to *Phaedrus*); new in Plato, that is, but he has adapted the old conception of the *arche*, which to the Ionian thinkers was both the original state of things and the permanent substance of

<sup>1</sup> The contrast was pointed out by Verdenius, *AGPh* 1962, 137, though without the above explanation.

<sup>2</sup> Grote, *Pl.* II, 209. Cf. pp. 393f. above.

<sup>3</sup> *Charm.* 155 c (vol. III, 394), *Symp.* 216 dff.

<sup>4</sup> Does πᾶσα ψυχή mean ‘all soul’ or ‘every soul’? ‘Soul in all its forms’ Skemp (*TMPLD* 3), ‘the soul in her totality’ Solmsen (*P.’s Th.* 93). Hackforth (p. 64) is undoubtedly right in saying that the distinction is not here before P.’s mind, though πᾶν σῶμα at 245 e4 seems to me (not all would agree) to demand, in its context, translation as ‘every body’. Rohde (*Psyche* 480 n. 22) simply said: ‘Plato here and throughout the *Phdr.* is speaking of the individual soul.’ On whether the argument is relevant to the immortality of individual souls, in which P. believed, see Hackforth 64f. Its primary concern is certainly with a world-soul like that of the *Timaeus*, but it is surely unimaginable that for P. ‘soul in its totality’ could remain if all individual souls were perishable. In any case the rest of the story is about the fates of immortal individual souls. Cf. Patterson, *P. on Immortality*, 115, 116. See also T. M. Robinson in Anton and Kustas, *Essays*, 350 nn. 1 and 3.

the cosmos with all its apparent variety, and also the initiator of its own changes. It must therefore be alive, and since it lived for ever, divine.<sup>1</sup> The hylozoism of the Milesians was no longer possible for Plato. Life (soul) and matter were not the same, and he sees soul as the self-moving principle which imparts its own motion to otherwise inert body, thus making it animate (en-souled, ἐμψυχον). There must still be an *arche*, to start, and sustain, the everlasting motion of the heavens and the cycles of physical generation, and this impartor of motion must be primary – or the universe would never have started – and imperishable, or it would come to a permanent stop (245 d8–e1).

The argument for the soul's immortality from its everlasting and self-caused motion had been propounded by Alcmaeon.<sup>2</sup> Plato adopted 'self-moved' as the distinguishing mark of life, and consequently what the soul by definition was. So here at 245 e 'self-moving' describes the 'nature' (*physis*) of soul, 'what it precisely is', and at *Laws* 895 e its definition (*logos*) is 'the motion which can move itself'. This conception of soul as originator of movement and *genesis* acquired tremendous importance, for by its aid Plato was able to satisfy himself, in the *Laws*, that the universe was rationally designed. Soul is soul, whichever of its functions it is performing, whether the mechanical-sounding one of enabling a body to move itself from within (i.e. voluntarily), or the exercise of its cognitive and emotional faculties. In the *Laws* (897a) the psychological origin of physical changes is stated unequivocally. Soul moves all things in sky and earth and sea by *its own* motions, which as there enumerated include will, counsel, judgement and emotion. The meaning seems to be that, as Hermeias, the Neoplatonic commentator on the *Phaedrus*, said (p. 119 Couvriér), all motions (in the wide sense of any kind of change) arise from conscious awareness of an end: 'The soul makes the motions having in view its own benefit and the good of the whole.' This is the doctrine which is worked out in detail in *Laws* 10 and *Timaeus*. It brings out the importance for Plato of *eros*, to which he devotes so much attention in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, for in its

<sup>1</sup> On the *arche* of the Ionians see vol. 1, 57, 87f., 128, 470; on hylozoism *ib.* 62–4. The equivalence of immortality and divinity to a Greek has been remarked on above, p. 330 n. 2.

<sup>2</sup> So Aristotle and Aët., Alcmaeon A 12 (DK vol. 1, 213; see vol. 1 of this work, 350f.).

## The *Phaedrus*

widest sense it is, as 'desire for the good' (*Symp.* 204e), another name for self-motion of the soul and so of all motion and change in the universe.<sup>1</sup> The connexion between the immortality of the soul as self-moving, and the doctrine of *eros* which is the ostensible subject of the speech, is closer than appears on the surface. Though Aristotle's theory of motion excluded the idea of a self-mover, the operation of the Unmoved Mover which is his First Cause owed more to Plato than his criticism in the *Metaphysics* (1071b37) suggests. 'What moves without being moved is the object of desire and thought. The primary objects of both are the same...but desire follows judgement [that something is good] rather than judgement desire, for thought is the *arche*' (*ib.* 1072a26-30).

*The composite soul.* In the *Phaedo* the soul was simple and unitary, and its immortality depended on this (cf. p. 346 above). In its pure state it was identical with *nous*, the faculty, shared by man with divinity, by which truth is grasped, and for which 'reason' is such an inadequate translation. All sensations, with their accompanying pleasures, pains, and desires, are ascribed to the body, and the soul is affected by them only through its association with the body. It is body that hinders the soul in its quest for truth and reality (65b, 66a), not a lower part of its own nature. Language is used very like that of the *Phaedrus* myth, but applied to the body, not to the soul's own lower impulses. Thus at 81c the body is 'heavy' and the soul that consorts with it 'is weighed down and dragged back to the visible world'.<sup>2</sup> In the *Phaedrus* Plato has begun to see it as illogical to ascribe emotions and desires solely to the body. The conception of soul as ultimate cause of all life and motion excludes this, for without soul any body is simply inert and lifeless. (Cf. *Phil.* 35d.) Somehow soul must be not only *nous* but the source of passions and desires. Its nature can only be illustrated by simile or metaphor, for as Plato

<sup>1</sup> The problem of the origin of the evil in the world, and whether or not P. changed his ideas about it, can only be examined later in the light of other dialogues, notably *Thi.* 176aff. and *Laws* bk 10. It is not always in his mind, but in this dialogue moral evil at least is due to soul's contamination with body.

<sup>2</sup> ἐμβριθεῖς...βαρύνεται τε καὶ ἔλκεται πάλιν ἐπὶ τὸν ὁρατὸν τόπον. Must not P. have had this passage in mind when he wrote at *Phdr.* 247b of the bad horse, βριθεὶ γάρ...ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥέπων καὶ βαρύνων?

frankly admits, to describe it as it is would be beyond human powers (246a), and this is something to be remembered. Yet in the *Republic* (439a ff.) Plato does explain in prosaic terms how the soul (in this earthly life) exhibits three impulses corresponding to those symbolized by the charioteer and his two horses.<sup>1</sup> Having laid down the principle that the same thing cannot act or be acted on in opposite ways at the same time in relation to the same object (436b), he takes the case of a thirsty man faced with water which it would be unwise to drink. *Qua* thirsty (i.e. *qua* desire), his soul only wants to drink, yet in another capacity it restrains him. This is the faculty which can calculate the effects,<sup>2</sup> but it can only advise him, not compel him, to refrain. Why do some men fall to temptation and others resist? There must be a third element in the soul, called by Plato *thymos*, which generally opposes the desires as reason's auxiliary. In this account it is not hard to detect the charioteer, good horse and bad horse of the *Phaedrus* allegory,<sup>3</sup> though it is not of course the 'superhuman exposition' which Plato fights shy of in the *Phaedrus*, because its context only required it to explain the familiar behaviour of human beings in this life. What can only be explained allegorically is the whole history of the soul in and out of the body and the cycle of incarnations.

*Is soul essentially tripartite?*<sup>4</sup> Can it now be that for Plato soul in its pure essence, utterly free from all desires and emotions which are only possible through its association with a body (such as appetite for food and sex, fear of pain, illness and death, joy in healthy exercise, worldly ambition), immortal and divine – that soul in and by itself can be composed of three parts as the *Phaedrus* myth suggests? This would indeed be a radical change, yet it is commonly

<sup>1</sup> P. 474 below. The contrast with *Phaedo* is emphasized by the choice of the same example, thirst. (Cf. *Phaedo* 94b.)

<sup>2</sup> τὸ λογιστικόν not νοῦς. At the moment P. is thinking of prudential calculation, not the divine power by which the soul can rise above this life altogether.

<sup>3</sup> I am not pronouncing on the question of chronology. Many have thought (e.g. von Arnim, *Jugendd.* 156) that the chariot-image would have been unintelligible unless the account in *Rep.* had preceded.

<sup>4</sup> Archer-Hind in *J. of Philol.* 1881, 'On Some Difficulties in the Platonic Psychology', is more helpful than much modern writing on this subject.

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believed to be the case. There are two difficulties in supposing it simple, consisting of *nous* alone: first, its triplicity is not confined to the incarnate state; second, it applies even to the souls of the immortal gods. They too are compared to a charioteer driving two horses.

On the first point we must note that even in the *Phaedo* the appetites and passions due to a soul's association with the body do not necessarily leave it after death. Unless it has lived the philosophic life, it is still contaminated with the corporeal and must wander in lower regions until, 'through the desires of that which accompanies it, the bodily, it is again imprisoned in a body' (81a-e). The contrast is not between incarnate and discarnate, but between souls still caught in the cycle of births and destined for reincarnation as man or beast, and the fully purified which depart to the divine and immortal,<sup>1</sup> 'quit of wandering and folly, fears and wild loves and the rest of human evils, and as is said of the initiated, dwelling with gods for the rest of time' (81a). Can it be said that in the *Phaedrus* too it is only souls in the cycle of births, whether in the darkness beneath or on the 'sub-heavenly journey' (256d), that are tripartite? Against this is usually cited the second difficulty, that even the souls of gods are included in the chariot simile.<sup>2</sup>

About this it must first be said that the simile is introduced with full consciousness. 'What the soul is' we cannot say, but only 'what it is like' (246a). It is mainly used to explain, by means of the unforgettable picture of the struggle of the driver and good horse against the bad horse, how a soul can fall from the heights and be imprisoned in an earthly body. But gods are in no danger of a fall, so their drivers and horses are alike 'good, and of good stock'.<sup>3</sup> Can one really press the imagery here? Has Plato really gone back on his belief that it is the nature of the composite to be dissolved, and

<sup>1</sup> I made this point in *Entretiens Hardt* III, 11-13, noting that in the simpler *Gorg.* myth also (524d-e) the soul retains its blemishes after death, without knowing that E. Groag had written similarly (*W. Stud.* 1915, 193), along with much on which I shall differ from him.

<sup>2</sup> Thus e.g. Crombie, *EPD* 1, 357: 'It can be argued that we should not take the divine horses seriously. The souls of the gods it may be said need a means of locomotion, and so they are given horses. This is possible but I do not find it convincing. Had Plato wanted to avoid the natural inference that all souls are propelled by feelings and desires it would not have been beyond him to have given the gods some other means of transport.'

<sup>3</sup> ἀγαθοὶ καὶ ἐξ ἀγαθῶν 246c. If we are to find a truth corresponding to every detail of the simile, perhaps we should be asking who were the parents of the horses of the gods.



the soul 'resembles most of all the divine, immortal, intelligible, simple and indissoluble' (*Phaedo* 78c, 80b)? I would still suggest<sup>1</sup> that if in the case of the gods driver and horses are alike good, then the soul of a god<sup>2</sup> is not a compound of 'different parts united in perfect, everlasting harmony' (so Groag, *l.c.* 201) but a simple unity, that which Plato calls *nous* and identifies with the divine and immortal. *Nous* alone, he says (that is, in the image, the driver of the horses), can perceive bodiless, truly existing reality (247c). Are we to suppose that only a part of a god has this power? Groag (*l.c.*) says that the partition of the divine souls is no mere mythical adjunct, 'but corresponds to Plato's philosophical conviction at the time, that in all souls the spiritual is lastingly bound up with the sensuous and even the gods are not free from the latter'. That in Plato's view the gods have a sensuous (*sinnlich*) side to their nature is surely incredible. Groag even says (p. 208) that the horses of the gods must have their 'sensuous satisfaction', basing this apparently (see his note) on the statement that their driver takes them to a manger (247e)! But what they are given is nectar and ambrosia, the food of the gods. Even the gods 'feast' (247a), and the 'best' part of the soul, that sees truth, is 'pastured' in a 'meadow'.<sup>3</sup> This should surely be a lesson to us not to press Plato on the details of his imaginative flight.

The speech is about love, its right and wrong use. To explain these, Socrates embarks on a mythical or allegorical description of human nature and its relation to the divine. The crux is to show how, though this relation is close, human souls could yet undergo a fall. This the chariot-image does, and so far as the relation is concerned, its message is that although we possess *nous* in common with the gods, we also possess corruptible parts from which they are free. It does not of course explain all this *philosophically*, any more than Genesis ii and iii explain in rational terms why man, made in the image of God, yet fell. It is a religious truth, apprehended by faith and expressible only in terms of 'as if'. It is as if, said Plato, the souls

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Entretiens Hardt, l.c.*

<sup>2</sup> That is, the god himself. P. goes out of his way to explain that because we have no clear notion of the gods we imagine them, unreasonably, to be, like other living beings, compounded of soul and body (246c-d). Archer-Hind's misunderstanding of this (*l.c.* p. 422 n. 4 above, on p. 127) is the one blemish on a splendid article.

<sup>3</sup> 248b-c. So too *Phaedo* 84a-b τὸ ἀληθές... καὶ ἀδόξαστον θεωμένη καὶ ὑπ' ἐκείνου τρεφόμενη.

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of God and man alike were each a charioteer driving winged horses. Since the nature of God, as we know, is pure and simple, we must imagine that in his case driver and horses are completely at one; but in other souls a flaw appears, for the horses have not the perfection of the driver, and one of them brings the whole equipage to the ground.<sup>1</sup> Without the image, the relation between men and gods could not be brought out.

The belief that the three parts of the soul, when they reach the divine level, are not merely in harmony but merge into one, namely *nous*, becomes easier when we reflect that, as James Adam put it, *nous* in Greek philosophy 'is never the merely *siccum lumen*, the clear, cold light which we are sometimes in the habit of calling reason' (*Camb. Prael.* 36f.). A reader of the *Phaedrus* can hardly be mistaken over this. The driver himself feels the pricking of *eros* (253e), which incidentally shows that the horses of the gods are *not* necessary to represent 'something comparable to desire' (Crombie, *EPD* 1, 357). The soul moves, as we have seen, through the power of *eros*,<sup>2</sup> and *eros* is a single stream of force directed at different objects of three main sorts – bodily pleasures, social and political influence, truth and goodness. When channelled in one direction it is weakened in others, and those who will not have it that the souls of the gods are unitary may perhaps agree on this, that their *eros* is set in one direction only. It may be that the word 'parts' (μέρη), which Plato applies to the soul in the *Republic* (not here), can be too rigidly interpreted.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Entretiens Hardt* III, 15. I should now prefer to write 'gods' and 'men'.

<sup>2</sup> It is *Eros* that gives *Psyche* her wings (Cornford, *P.'s C.* 354; cf. Verdenius, *AGPh* 1962, 141 n. 43). Perhaps one should say that ψυχή and ἔρως are the same. This is the thesis of M. Landmann in *Ztschr. f. ph. F.* 1956. Cf. also Groag, *l.c.* 191.

<sup>3</sup> In the *Tim.*, where the parts of the soul are most markedly separated (e.g. by locating them in different parts of the body), μέρη does not occur, though μοῖρα (unusual in this sense) once. (Cf. p. 476 n. 3 below.) There *P.* uses εἶδος or γένος, or most frequently the convenient Greek idiom of article and adj. According to Groag (*l.c.* 193) *P.* intends no mere conceptual difference between 'sides' or powers of a unitary being, but independent parts, each a being with its own logically separable attributes. He points to the fact that they can exist separately, νοῦς without a body, the lower two parts without νοῦς in animals (*Rep.* 441a-b, *Tim.* 91e), and the lowest alone in plants (*Tim.* 77b-c). He quotes Aristotle's denial of κχωρισμένα μόρια of the soul (*De an.* 432b1; more clearly at 413b27), without mentioning that, while calling it a unity with different δυνάμεις which were only ἕτερα λόγῳ he too held that a living creature could possess one or two without the others (415a10). *EN* 1102a27-32 shows how ψυχή can have an ἄλογον and a λόγον ἔχον without necessarily being divided into separate parts.

## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

*The order of earthly lives* (248d-e, pp. 403f. above). The philosopher of course is at the top, and the tyrant at the bottom, in accordance with his condemnation in *Rep.* 8 and 9. That the Sophist and demagogue should be next to the tyrant is also natural, but other positions are surprising. One would not expect the pairing of politician (or lover of honour) with businessman (lover of gain: cf. *Rep.* 581c-d), nor, at least at first sight, the comparatively low position of prophets, initiators or poets. The words 'or other mimetic artists' may be intended as a warning that the poets at least are not the inspired creators mentioned earlier with such praise, but resemble rather those condemned in the *Republic* (pp. 545f. below), who relying on their human talent produce imitations twice removed from reality. Nor are all prophets and initiators inspired or disinterested; an unworthy type is castigated at *Rep.* 364b-365a. The ninefold classification never reappears. It does not fit with the more usual threefold one (e.g. *Rep.* 581c) based on the Pythagorean three types of life (vol. 1, 164f.), and it may contain some elements of passing fancy to which Plato would not have liked to be held.<sup>1</sup>

*Recollection and the Forms.* Much of the myth is allegorical, and in substance inseparable from the rest of the dialogue. Dialectical method, the distinction between knowledge and opinion, knowledge as recollection of the Forms, are all introduced in a mythical context. The *Meno* simply says that the soul, being immortal, has learned and seen everything both here and in the other world and may be reminded of its previous knowledge (81c-d, pp. 249-53 above). Here we are shown the difficulties, triumphs and disasters that lie behind its struggle to catch sight of the objects of knowledge, the Forms. And the way to success is through philosophic love, starting, as in the *Symposium*, with love of beauty in an individual body. Given (as Plato grants even in the *Phaedo*) that the first steps towards recognition of the Forms must be through the senses, they are most easily achieved through appreciation of beauty, because Beauty is the only Form whose counterpart on earth is directly visible to the eye of the

<sup>1</sup> Hackforth (83f.) made a manful attempt to explain it on grounds of comparative worth to society, a suggestion which Verdenius denied (*AGPh* 1962, 133).

## The *Phaedrus*

body as itself to the eye of the soul (250b–d); and it must be beauty of a *person*, not (as Wordsworth or we might think more appropriate) of nature, music or anything else, because the heights of philosophy can only be scaled by ‘two going together’, lovers who have sublimated their desire in a common pursuit of dialectic (conversation or discussion). Beauty ranks with wisdom (truth) and goodness as supreme Forms, or rather aspects of a single supreme Form. But as Beauty it provides a link with the sensible world which was lacking in the more austere setting of the *Phaedo*. *Symposium* and *Phaedrus* present another side of the upward impulse, not merely intellectual curiosity but *eros* – a passion, even a madness, but a divine one.

*How knowledge is acquired: collection and division.* At 249b–c, e it is said that only souls which have seen the truth (i.e. the Forms) can be born as men. This is because (in a sentence difficult to translate but of clear general purport)<sup>1</sup> only men have the power to reason, that is, to form a general concept from a number of acts of perception,<sup>2</sup> and in doing so they are in fact being reminded of the realities which they saw on their journey with the gods. These concepts are tokens, or means of remembrance (ὑπομνήματα), which the philosopher uses in his progress towards ‘complete initiation’ (full knowledge). They are not Platonic Forms but ‘called after them’ (249b7), and to acquire them is to exercise not a philosophic method but a universal human faculty, possessed by an untutored slave, as the *Meno* showed. Without it men could not even *use* terms like horse, triangle, piety, let alone convert our beliefs about them into knowledge as the philosopher does. We should not therefore, as some have done,<sup>3</sup> identify the use of this faculty with the dialectical act of ‘collection’ (συναγωγή). It is a mark of our common humanity, of which no more can be said in

<sup>1</sup> It is probably best to keep the received text with Burnet than to adopt the emendations (τὸ κατ’ εἶδος and λόγῳ for λόγῳ with Hackforth. (For details see his and de Vries’s notes.) If τὸ were to be inserted, it would be a question where to put it. τὸ κατ’ ε. λ. or κατὰ τὸ ε. λ.? The latter gives H.’s version (‘by way of what is called a Form’), the former would to my mind make easier that of Verdenius (*Mnem.* 1955, 280, in spite of the parallels offered), in which λεγόμενον is subject of λόγῳ and means ‘what is said in generic terms’ (de V.; Verd. does not offer a translation). This is doubtless right.

<sup>2</sup> ‘The gift of humanity is precisely that, unlike the animals, we form concepts’ (J. Bronowski, *Identity of Man* 48).

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Thompson p. 107, Adam, *Rep.* vol. II, 173.

explanation than was said by Aristotle, that 'the mind is such as to be capable of this experience' and 'in this way sense-perception itself implants the universal' (*An. post.* 100a13, b4). The dialectician works only with these specific or generic universals, not with particulars at all. At the same time, owing to man's common possession of reason, the process of recollection is a *continuous* one: the philosopher only takes it further.

With this passage out of the way, we can turn to those descriptive of dialectical method. There are three.

1. 265c-e. From a study of his own speeches on love, says Socrates, two procedures emerge. (1) 'To take a synoptic view and bring widely scattered things under one form, so that one may make clear by definition whatever it is that one wants to expound at the time.' (2) 'Then conversely to be able to cut it up at the natural joints, not hacking at any part like an incompetent butcher.'

The next two passages are repetitions of the conditions necessary to make a man a master of the art of speaking.

2. 273d-e. Besides classifying the characters of his respective audiences, he must be able 'to divide existing things according to their kinds (εἶδη) and embrace each one under a single form (ιδέα)'.<sup>1</sup>

3. 277b-c. 'To know the truth about everything on which one speaks or writes, and to be able to isolate everything in definition; next, having done that, to divide it into kinds (κατ' εἶδη) down to one which can no longer be divided' (i.e. the lowest definable species; we are not concerned with the indefinite plurality of individuals).

(a) *Collection*. This is not induction in the ordinary sense of the Aristotelian 'argument from particulars to the universal' (*Top.* 105a13), nor does it, by itself, lead to a definition.<sup>1</sup> It gives the wider concept, or genus, in which the notion to be defined (in this case love) is to be included. This 'common kind' (265e) is irrationality or madness, and it was perceived not by a process of argument or methodical examination of individual cases but directly, by intuition or insight (συνορᾶν):<sup>2</sup> we divine that love is in this general category, that this is

<sup>1</sup> This is obvious, though P.'s use of the word ὁρίζεσθαι, ordinarily translated 'define', could cause confusion. Its original meaning of 'setting a boundary' is still alive, and what the dialectician does is to erect a fence, as it were, enclosing an area within which the quarry will be found, though it is not alone in it. <sup>2</sup> Cf. Cornford, *PTK* 186f., 267.

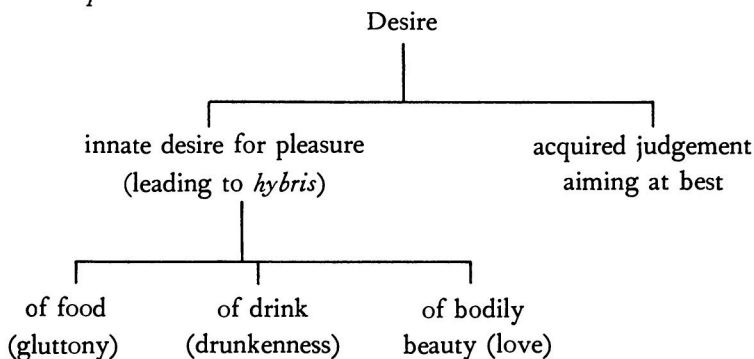
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its fundamental aspect. We also see that other phenomena, as diverse in themselves ('widely scattered') as ordinary lunacy, inordinate passion (ὑβρις), prophecy and poetry, share this essential property. We have defined the general field within which love is to be found.

(b) *Division* follows, to distinguish which form of madness is to be identified with love, and so define it by genus and differentiae. This is a process or method, though intuition must still play a part in discerning the 'natural joints', selecting the specific differences and ignoring inessentials. Thus madness is first divided into two main varieties, 'left-hand' and 'right-hand', due to human ailment and divine possession respectively. Both are further subdivided, until the left-hand side isolates a definition of 'sinister' love, and the right-hand side of divine love, thus making clear (a) how the two kinds of love, though sharing the same name, are quite different, (b) how divine love differs from the other members of its sub-class, divine madness.

These are the processes, says Socrates (265 c-266b), illustrated by his two speeches. As rhetorical set pieces, they would hardly succeed

### First speech

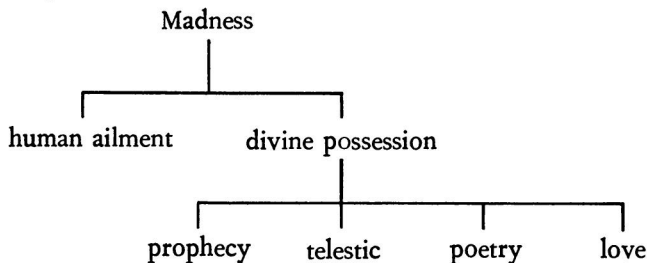


if they simply took the form of philosophical analyses, but allowing for this, and for the fact that, although the genus selected in the first speech is *desire*, the lover's desire is repeatedly shown to be a form of madness,<sup>1</sup> they keep pretty closely to the pattern.

<sup>1</sup> The lover's desire is irrational (ἀνευ λόγου 238b), he is sick (238e), driven by a frenzy (ὁλοστροφος 240d), his love is madness (μανία) and he is ruled by folly (241a). On the difficulties seen by Hackforth in reconciling the speeches with the method, see Ackrill's review, *Mind* 1953, p. 279.

## Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus

### Second speech



The instantaneous, 'collective', upward leap from love etc. to desire or madness naturally does not appear on the tables.

We see again that the smallest units with which the philosopher deals are *infimae* ('indivisible' 277 b7) *species*. The experience of making the lowest generalization from the infinity of individual cases is presupposed, as an activity of ordinary, non-philosophical man in virtue of his humanity. This is perhaps the biggest contribution of dialectic at its present stage to the emergence of a purely formal logic under the hands of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup>

In these passages Plato's aim is the Socratic one of definition, and the dual method itself is a development of the Socratic as it appears in earlier dialogues, particularly in the need to follow collection by division, not mistaking statement of the genus for full definition. Thus in the *Euthyphro* 12d-e (pp. 113f. above), 'piety is justice' is followed by the question 'what part of justice?' and at *Gorg.* 462c ff., to define rhetoric the genus *empeiria* (empirical knack as opposed to *technē*) is selected, a part of this is first cut off as 'pandering', which in turn is divided into four sub-species – cookery, cosmetics, sophistic, rhetoric – and the specific character of the last is described. Here in

<sup>1</sup> I still think that it is legitimate to speak of genus, species and differentiae in connexion with Plato's method, and that Sayre (*PAM* 186 ff.) exaggerates the difference between it and Aristotelian logic. The differences he points out seem rather (though he would not agree) criticisms of P. for not having thought the matter through. P. always had other things in mind, and evolved a method only so far as it was useful for his main aims. It therefore remained embryonic, to be systematically developed by Aristotle. The great difference is the ontological one that for Aristotle only the individual has full substantial existence and classes as they widen grow progressively further from reality, whereas for Plato the highest, most all-embracing Forms are highest also in the scale both of being and of value. But this belongs rather to a discussion of the *Sophist*.

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the *Phaedrus* (269b) Socrates says that, through ignorance of dialectic, rhetoricians cannot even say what rhetoric is. Polus was an example, and in showing him how to do it Socrates had to give him a lesson in dialectical method.<sup>1</sup>

'Cosmological chatter'. Of the dozens of points offering themselves for comment in the *Phaedrus*, I choose one more,<sup>2</sup> the reference to 'airy cosmological chatter about nature' at 270a. Here Socrates calls this occupation, in the uncomplimentary terms which had been commonly applied to himself<sup>3</sup> but emphatically rejected in the *Apology*, the indispensable adjunct to any worthwhile art. The perfection of rhetoric achieved by Pericles was partly due, he says, to what he learned from the cosmologist Anaxagoras and his insight into the nature of mind. An orator's immediate aim is to understand the *psyche*, and that demands a knowledge of nature as a whole, as does, according to Hippocrates, a physician's understanding of the body.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The common opinion that the method of dialectic in *Phdr.* is a complete innovation has already been challenged by Levinson in Anton and Kustas (p. 270), and Morrison (*Phron.* 1963, 42f.) thinks that at least the second part (division) was current in the 5th century. (See vol. III, 204.) That it was Socratic is suggested by Xen. *Mem.* 4.5.12 (vol. III, 440; on Xenophon's independence of P., Stenzel, *RE*, 2. Reihe, v. Halbb. 859-64). Gulley however in 1962 (*PTK* 108) still thought of it as linking *Phdr.* with *Soph.* and later dialogues. See now J. M. E. Moravcsik in *Exegesis*, 324-48.

<sup>2</sup> The story of Theuth, and the comparative value for P. of the written and spoken word, have been discussed on pp. 57ff. above.

<sup>3</sup> ἀδόλεσχα καὶ μετεωρολογία. See vol. III, 374 and 364 (for S. as μετεωροσοφιστής). Hackforth's 'high-flown speculation' conceals the meaning of the latter term. It is talk about, or study of, the things in the sky, including, but not confined to, astronomy.

<sup>4</sup> To say that ἀνευ τῆς τοῦ ὅλου φύσεως refers only to the whole soul or body (as Hackforth, followed by de Vries) makes nonsense of the need for μετεωρολογία. (Jones has it right, Loeb Hippocr. vol. I, xxxiii.) I take it that in mentioning Hippocrates Phaedrus has in mind the medical writer or writers against whom the author of *Vet. Med.* (ch. 1) insisted that medicine 'had no need of empty hypotheses on subjects like τὰ μετέωρα καὶ τὰ ὑπὸ γῆς'. Medicine, they claimed, demands a knowledge of what man is, and this in turn a knowledge of the elements of which he like everything else was composed. But this, says *V.M.*, belongs to natural philosophy, and has no more to do with medicine than with painting. Such people talk of 'opposites', and of illness as simply due to a preponderance of 'the hot', 'the cold' and so on, to be treated by the application of its opposite – a gross over-simplification according to *V.M.* One cannot apply 'the hot' in *abstracto*, but only this or that hot *substance*, which will have other properties and effects. From medicine we can learn what man is, but not vice versa. (See chh. 15 and 20.) This does not of course end the search for an actual work of H. making the point, for which see Dies, *A. de P.* 30ff.; Jones, *Ph. and Med.* 16-20; Hackforth and de V. *ad loc.* But if I am right, the work cannot be *V.M.* itself, as Littré thought.



## *Phaedo, Symposium, Phaedrus*

The interplay here of the ironic and the serious is extremely subtle. In the first place, one would expect the Platonic Socrates to say that to know the truth about the soul, as about anything, one must see it in the light of the Forms, not of the physical universe, especially after the autobiographical section of the *Phaedo* describing his disillusionment with the natural philosophers. At the same time, his mythical accounts of the regions in which, after death, the soul beholds reality are inseparable from cosmological speculations. Souls ride to the rim of the revolving sky; hell, 'purgatory', and the final home of the blessed all have locality. Even more striking was the detailed description of the earth in the *Phaedo*, from Tartarus to the real surface which we have never seen. The 'spindle of Necessity' in the eschatological myth of *Republic* 10 is a detailed model of the structure of the universe as Plato understood it. Later, in the *Timaeus*, the 'circles of the world-soul' and the orbits of the heavenly bodies are practically identified. If the cosmological theories of Anaxagoras and the other natural philosophers led to an understanding of these mysteries, then such 'chatter' would indeed be valuable, but of course they did not. In the *Phaedo* Anaxagoras was singled out as the worst disappointment, for he promised to explain the universe as the product of Mind and utterly failed to do so. Was *he* the man to teach Pericles the real nature of the mind?

What 'Hippocrates and the true account' say about nature turns out to be something that surely Hippocrates did not say, namely that to be experts (*technikoi*) ourselves and make others the same we must apply the dialectical method of division (270c-d); the materialistic speculations of the so-called students of nature give no insight into reality at all. So much for Anaxagoras. Of Pericles as a man Plato had no high opinion, even allowing for some exaggeration in the *Gorgias*. Is he then, as Hackforth thought, sincerely praising him here not as a statesman but as an orator? No, for to Plato the two cannot be separated. An art must be judged by its aims, and Pericles's aims were unworthy. In the present passage (270b5) he introduces again the distinction, familiar from the *Gorgias* (and earlier in the *Phaedrus*, 260e5), between an 'empirical knack' and a genuine discipline (*technē*); and for him the *technikos*, knowing the true

## *The Phaedrus*

nature or essence (οὐσία) of his subject, is none other than the (Platonic) philosopher.<sup>1</sup>

### ADDITIONAL NOTE

*A speech by Lysias?* The question whether Plato has given us a genuine work of Lysias or a pastiche of his own has naturally aroused much interest, but the details concern students of the orators rather than of Plato. Also 'a decision must remain more or less arbitrary', as de Vries rightly says. He gives a survey of opinions (*Pl.* 12-14), and a few others are in Hackforth, 17f. One may add in favour of genuineness Thompson (*Gorg.* iii), Brochard (*Études* 67), Plöbst (*RE*, xxvi. Halbb. 2537). Cornford (unpublished) thought it genuine and necessarily so if Lysias was still alive. For Platonic authorship one may add Diès, *Aut. de P.* 419, Jowett (III, 119). Dover (*Lys.* 69-71) is extremely cautious, but stylistic evidence inclines him to put the onus of proof on those who would ascribe it to Plato. According to Morton and Winspear (*Gk. to the C.* 47f.), the computer shows it to be 'a Platonic exaggeration of the difference between himself and Lysias'. This is based on the repeated occurrence of καὶ μὲν δὴ, which in itself, according to their own criteria of significance, should be an unconscious difference.

<sup>1</sup> For the usual view of this passage, different from that given here, see Thompson's long and informative note on pp. 121-3 of his ed.

## VII

# THE REPUBLIC

### INTRODUCTORY

The *Republic*, besides being Plato's greatest work, is almost five times as long as the longest dialogue so far considered, and a chapter on it must be even more of a *Good Food Guide* (see preface) than the others. By itself it appeals to all the classes mentioned on pp. xiv f. Even the literary critics, suppressing their wrath at Plato's uncompromising stand over poetry, will usually acknowledge it as one of the world's greatest literary – and in parts dramatic – masterpieces. The need to direct a reader, therefore, both to a study of the text itself and to others who have written about it from a variety of motives, becomes even more pressing.

*Subject.* The Greek title of the work (misleadingly represented for us by the English form of the Latin *Res publica*) means 'The State or On Justice',<sup>1</sup> and its subject, not merely ostensibly but in reality, is the nature of justice and injustice and their consequences for the just and the unjust man. This is stated at an early stage, and despite digressions and subordinate themes (of which the establishment of the imaginary state is the chief), Plato in this most skilfully constructed work is always bringing us back to it.<sup>2</sup> 'Justice' is the traditional

<sup>1</sup> Or rather 'On the Just Man', *περί δικαίου* (Thrasyllos *ap.* D.L. 3.60 and some MSS). The double title may just possibly be Plato's own. Hoerber, *Theme of P.'s Rep.* ch. 7.

<sup>2</sup> At 369a the reason for constructing an imaginary state is that it will show up the origins of justice and injustice, and reminders of this aim come later in bk 2 at 371e, 372e and 376c. After the full description of the state in bk 4 (427d and 434d; cf. 420b) they must, says S., immediately examine it to discover where in it are justice and injustice and which will bring happiness to the one who chooses it. In bk 5 (472b), when Glaucon asks whether such a state is feasible, S. reminds him that their real aim is to find out what justice and injustice are. Cf. also 6.484a and 8.548c–d, where it is said that better definitions could have been found of the philosopher and of the timocratic state, had they not been more concerned with discovering the difference between the just and the unjust life and individual. Proclus gives a good and balanced discussion of this question (*In Remp.* 1, 7–14 Kr.) and for full treatment in modern times see Hoerber's *Theme* and cf. Nettleship, *Lectures* 68f. Many more reff. will be found in Maguire's article in *CJ* 1965. He takes the opposite view.

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rendering of *dikaiosynē*, but it approaches the wider of the two senses of the word defined by Aristotle, of which he says (*EN* 1129b25) that it is 'the whole of virtue (*aretē*) as it affects our relations with others... (1130a9) and its opposite injustice is not a part of badness but the whole... (a12). In its social aspect it is justice, but regarded simply as a characteristic, it is virtue.' One may compare the *Euthyphro* (12d–e, p. 106 above), where piety is said to be a 'part' of justice. It accords of course with the Socratic doctrine of the unity of the virtues, and though in the *Republic* Plato deals with them separately, the perfectly just man (who turns out to be the philosopher) is for him the perfectly good man in every way.<sup>1</sup> So our subject becomes 'to determine the whole course of life which we must follow if we are to live to the best advantage' (344e). It is Plato's full and final answer to the question in the *Gorgias*, 'how to live'.<sup>2</sup>

The rest follows from this. The good life can only be lived in a community, so it must be seen in its communal aspect; it calls for an understanding of human nature, that is, of the *psyche* (for without that one cannot know what is good for it), and most difficult of all, of the nature of goodness itself; and for all this the paramount need is the right sort of education. Many topics from other dialogues will recur, for basing himself on Socrates as he still does, Plato has written them all with the same object in view – the good life – which he here treats more comprehensively than in any other. Most indeed of those so far considered may be regarded as from one point of view preliminary studies for the *Republic*. Virtue is knowledge throughout, the doctrine of Forms is central, the soul is immortal and its fate is described in another eschatological myth. That the just man is the best thief (334a) recalls the paradox of the *H. Min.* (367c), democracy is criticized in Book 8 (558b) on the same grounds as in the *Protagoras* (that no one cares whether a politician has expert knowledge), poets are arraigned on moral grounds as at *Gorg.* 501e–502d and on grounds of ignorance as in the *Apology*. Many other touches recall the *Gorgias*, especially in the characterization of the tyrannical man in Book 9: he

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the description of the philosopher at 487a.

<sup>2</sup> πῶς βιωτέον; *Gorg.* 492d; cf. 487a. The phrase at 500c (ὄντινα χρὴ τρόπον ζῆν) is repeated verbatim at *Rep.* 352d.

## *The Republic*

does not do what he wishes, he is unhappier with power than without, one must not be dazzled by outward appearances but look for the man within, and it is better to be punished for wickedness than to escape (591a). The idea that a craftsman looks towards the Form of the utensil he is making, and that he must be instructed by the user, because the goodness and beauty of an artefact or anything else depend on its usefulness (10.596b and 601a–602a), recall both the *Cratylus* (389b, 390b) and the *H. Maj.* (295 c–e). Many more examples could be quoted, and this absorption of much of Plato's other work in the *Republic* may mitigate slightly the necessary brevity of its treatment here.

One further point before we proceed. Ethics as a philosophical subject has been said to be 'the logical study of the language of morals', an analytical discipline unconcerned with recommending one course of action rather than another: moral or political arguments aiming at such recommendation are different and do not belong to philosophy. Perhaps a philosopher would find it useful, if he could, to separate for his own purposes descriptive from prescriptive aspects of the discussions in the *Republic*, but besides being very difficult, it would lead to a caricature of Plato. His question 'What is justice?' did not simply call for an analysis of current usage. It meant also 'What must we get men to see that they *should* mean by justice if they are to use the concept as a guide to right living?' For to him it was an existing changeless Form, and the variety and inconsistency of current notions of it were simply evidence that no one yet understood its essence. He could never, like Aristotle (*EN* 1103b27), have contrasted theoretical study of the nature of virtue with the practical aim of becoming good.<sup>1</sup> The Socratic 'Virtue is knowledge' was still his guide.

<sup>1</sup> Hence the criticism of a philosopher like Flew, who sees it as a 'vitiating fault', running right through the *Rep.*, that P. failed to appreciate 'the fundamental distinction between what is the case and what ought to be'. See his essay in Carter's *Scept. and Moral Principles*. Perhaps he did, for Hume, who first drew attention to it, claimed to have observed this fault 'in every system of morality which I have hitherto met with' (*Treatise*, bk 3, 3, p. 177 of Everyman ed.). Hume's famous distinction is still avidly discussed. The symposium on *The Is–Ought Question* (ed. Hudson, 1969) contains by no means the latest contributions. See for instance F. G. Downing, 'Ways of Deriving "Ought" from "Is"' (*PhQ* 1972), and two articles in *Ethics* 1972: R. F. Hannaford, 'You Ought to Derive "Ought" from "Is"' and G. O. Allen, 'The Is and Ought Question Reformulated and Answered'. Cf. also L. Versényi's assertion in *Philosophy* 1971: 'Nothing but an "is" can justify an "ought"'. (P. 519 with n. 2 below.)

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*Date<sup>1</sup> and dramatic date.* Neither the date (or dates) of composition nor the supposed date of the conversation can be fixed with certainty. A number of theories have had their day. According to Rohde and others the dialogue was an amalgam of different chronological strata many times re-worked.<sup>2</sup> Then came the idea of two editions, one published c. 390, the other c. 370. All that remains of these earlier views is the suggestion that book 1 is an early dialogue (christened by Dümmler *Thrasymachus*) which Plato had the idea of using, perhaps twenty years later, as a beginning for his great work. Friedländer called this 'an assumption which few would question today', whereas to Taylor it was 'inconceivable' and to C. H. Kahn is 'wildly implausible'.<sup>3</sup> If such critics do not always pay attention to the stylistic arguments which weighed so heavily with scholars like Ritter and von Arnim, it yet remains difficult to conceive of book 1 as ever intended for any other place than that which it now occupies. Otherwise only book 10 has features which might suggest changes of plan, with rough edges not entirely smoothed down.<sup>4</sup> Doubtless a work of the size and scope of the *Republic* took a long time to write, but the prevailing view at present is that it was finished c. 374, a long time after Plato's first visit to Sicily but before the second. However, as Diès wisely said, 'Toutes ces dates sont conjecturales et sont données comme tels' (Budé cxxxviii).

As to the dramatic date, I will simply mention two points which emphasize its uncertainty. First, Taylor (*PMW* 263) rejects 411 because Cephalus is still alive. He actually refers to ps.-Plut. *Lysias* 835e, yet himself favours 421, whereas according to that perhaps dubious authority Cephalus was dead by 443. Secondly, both Taylor and Adam invoke the mention at 368a of Glaucon and Adeimantus having distinguished themselves in battle at Megara, but whereas Taylor quotes Thuc. 4.72 for a battle there in 424, Adam, quoting

<sup>1</sup> For a general survey of opinions see Diès in Budé ed. cxxii-cxxxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. Groag in *W. Stud.* 37 (1915), 190.

<sup>3</sup> Friedl., *Pl.* III, 63 f., II, 50-66, Taylor, *PMW* 264, Kahn in *JPh* 1967, 368. Kahn refers to K. Vretska in *W. Stud.* 1958, 30-45, for a detailed argument against the thesis. For earlier views see Friedl. II, 305 f., Leisegang, *RE* 2405. Field (*P. and Contemps.* 67), Gauss (*Handkomm.* I, 2, ch. 6) and Ryle (*P.'s P.* 11) may be added to those in favour of the thesis.

<sup>4</sup> See Nettleship, *Lectures* 355.

## *The Republic*

Diod. Sic. 13.65, says 'perhaps in 409'. Neither mentions Jowett's conjecture of 456.<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, though steeped in the moral and political atmosphere of Plato's lifetime, the *Republic* can be appreciated without a precise knowledge of the year or years in which he wrote it, or when he imagined his fictitious conversation to have taken place – a matter about which he was by no means always particular. On the whole, Taylor has made it likely that most of the time he had a date about 421 in mind.

*Scene and characters.* The Athenians, 'hospitable to gods as to everyone else' as Strabo says, had just instituted a festival of the Thracian goddess Bendis, and Socrates went down to the Piraeus with Plato's brother Glaucon to see the show. As they started for home, a slave of Polemarchus, brother of Lysias the orator, ran up from behind and asked them to stop. Turning round, they saw a small group approaching them: Polemarchus, Plato's other brother Adeimantus, Niceratus son of Nicias (p. 126 above) and others. Polemarchus insisted that they come back to dinner with him: later there was to be a relay torch-race on horseback and an all-night carnival. (Considering the length of their subsequent discussion, it is to be feared that they missed these delights.)<sup>2</sup> Arrived at his house, they found a varied company, including Polemarchus's aged father Cephalus, a wealthy Syracusan settled at Athens, his brothers Lysias and Euthydemus, the Sophist Thrasy machus, Charmantides a pupil of Isocrates (*Antid.* 93) and Clitophon. Niceratus, Euthydemus, and Charmantides take no part in the conversation and Clitophon only interrupts it briefly at 340a–b, though it may have been from listening to it that he got his adverse impression of Socrates as going around exhorting

<sup>1</sup> The introduction of the Bendideia, if its date were known, would of course be decisive, but as far as I can see the repeated statement that it was 'in the time of Pericles' (e.g. Knaack in *RE* III, 269; Stengel, *Gr. Kultusalt.* 246) rests on nothing more than a presupposition as to the dramatic date of *Rep.*! (Adam suggested 'perhaps 410'.) Even Strabo (10.18 names Plato as his authority for the Bendideia at Athens.

<sup>2</sup> Some have thought this an indication that bk I was not originally a part of the whole work (v. Arnim, *Jugendd.* 73). However, once caught up in the search for justice, they may well have been willing to forgo such trifles more suited to the φιλοθέαμονες of 475d than to φιλόσοφοι.

## *Main problem approached and stated*

people to care for their souls and practise justice, without being able to give these conceptions any real content.<sup>1</sup>

### (1) THE MAIN PROBLEM APPROACHED AND STATED (BKS I-2, 367E)

*The holiday-makers: Cephalus* (327-331 d). We begin with a group of spectators returning in holiday mood from a festival and procession, engaged in fact in the activities of the most ordinary citizen, the 'lover of sights and sounds'. An invitation is issued and the host is a very old man. What more natural than that Socrates should engage him in conversation on the subject of old age, its drawbacks and compensations? Is it perhaps his wealth that enables him to face it more cheerfully than others do? Well, that has at least this advantage, that he can pay all his due debts to gods and men and face the next world with the comforting reflection that he has lived justly, never deceived anyone or robbed him of his due. So the moral argument begins, from the credo of an upright old gentleman with no pretensions to philosophy. Socrates cannot resist the opening. Is this really the meaning of justice (or right conduct), simply to tell the truth and return what we have received? Does it cover the case of a friend's knife if the friend goes mad?<sup>2</sup>

*Refutation of the unsophisticated: Polemarchus* (331 d-336 a). Here Polemarchus breaks in, and the old man thankfully turns away to the more congenial task of seeing to the sacrifice. What follows is an exhibition of that elementary Socratic sparring, not too scrupulous in its means, with which the earliest dialogues have made us familiar. Polemarchus thinks that justice consists in serving friends and hurting foes. Socrates ripostes with the somewhat worn analogy between a moral quality and a *technē* (professional skill) which so justifiably annoyed some of his critics (vol. III, 442). His arguments are:

<sup>1</sup> See the little dialogue *Clitophon*. There at 410c C. threatens to desert S. for Thrasy Machus, who makes the same criticism here at 336c-d.

<sup>2</sup> This purely debating point is rightly ignored by S. when in bk 4 (433e) he says that the magistrates in the good city will rule that no one shall possess another's goods or be deprived of his own, 'because this is just'.



## *The Republic*

(a) To give friends and foes their due in a matter of health and sickness a doctor would be best qualified, on a sea-voyage a ship's captain: the skill of either is of more use than justice. Nor has justice any useful product as have farming and shoemaking. How then can it help? In money matters, suggests Polemarchus. Well, money is used to buy and sell, but in buying a horse one would rely on a good judge of horseflesh rather than on a just man. (That Polemarchus should let this pass, without remarking that the horsey man's expertise will not benefit the buyer if he is dishonest, is almost incredible.) Justice, or honesty, in fact is only useful when we want to put anything in store, i.e. when we are not using it, which suggests that it is not of great use itself.

(b) In general the man most able to help can also do most harm: a physician makes the best poisoner, the art of defence is also that of attack. So if a just man is good at keeping money safe, he will be good at stealing it.

(c) A man's enemies are those he thinks bad, but he may be mistaken. If he is, justice will mean harming a good man.

(d) Even if he is right, to harm anything – say a horse – is to make it a worse horse. Similarly if a man is harmed he becomes worse by the standards of human excellence, and justice is human excellence, so he becomes less just. But as musicians cannot by their art make anyone unmusical (the *technē* analogy again), so a good man cannot by his goodness make anyone bad. Neither then will he ever harm anyone, and that definition of justice falls.<sup>1</sup>

On the argument that dialogues which show Socrates arguing unfairly must have been written before his death,<sup>2</sup> this brush with Polemarchus would have to be dated very early. Moreover the fallacy of equating *technai* and virtues was shown up by Critias in the *Charmides*, and we had enough of the paradox that the truthful man is the best liar in the *H. Minor*.<sup>3</sup> Yet the meticulous planning of the *Republic* as a whole forbids us to suppose that these episodes in book I are just bits of Plato's early work which he found lying about and

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the similar argument at *Apol.* 25 c–e, and Adkins, *M. and R.* 268 f.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 191 f. (*H. Min.*) and 213 f. (*Prot.*) above.

<sup>3</sup> *Charm.* 165 c–166 c, p. 160 above; *H. Min.* pp. 192 f., 196.

## *Main problem approached and stated*

pushed in. The alternative is that he is leading his readers to a climax through the stages of his own pilgrimage: the morality of the ordinary decent citizen, the Socratic elenchus in its crudest form, as practised on the unwary in the belief that the end justified the means, the Sophistic case and Socrates's answer to it, and finally the Platonic philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

*The Sophist's case: Thrasymachus (336b-354c).* With Thrasymachus we advance from the ambience of the earliest dialogues to that of the *Protagoras* or *Gorgias* where the interlocutor is no meek friend or pupil, but a mature and formidable Sophist, ready to put the case against conventional justice with passionate force.<sup>2</sup> His arguments have been discussed in vol. III (88-97),<sup>3</sup> so may be briefly dealt with here, with the emphasis on Socrates's replies. Thrasymachus, who has been impatiently awaiting his chance, bursts out that justice is nothing but the interest of the stronger, meaning thereby the sovereign power in a state, be it the people or a single despot. This power makes laws in its own interest, and the just man is the subject who must obey them. Socrates replies:

(a) Rulers may make mistakes and pass laws that are not in their own interest. Thrasymachus agrees, but claims they are not then acting *qua* rulers: a ruler *as such* is infallible (a rash assertion as it turns out).

(b) Every art is practised for the good of its object, not the practitioner, e.g. medicine for the body. This includes the art of government, which being practised on the subjects must aim at their good. Th. retorts that this is like calling the ultimate aim of the shepherd the good of the sheep, which he is in fact tending in order to eat or sell

<sup>1</sup> For a different view see Joseph, *A. and M. Phil.* 1-14. Where an argument is on the face of it unfair, he regards it as making a sound point 'indirectly', by *reductio ad absurdum*, in which 'the absurd conclusion is reached fairly from false assumptions' which were clear to P. This is something 'we are left to discover'. But that does not make it less unfair to Polemarchus. J. seems to think that the only alternative is to suppose that P. himself was taken in by his own quibbles, but I wholeheartedly agree that he was not. The point that the just man will be a good thief is, as Penner has noted (*Exegesis* 138), no argument against Polemarchus's definition, for to steal money may help a friend or harm an enemy. (At 382c S. himself says that lying may be used in this way.) But needless to say, S. does not point this out, nor does it occur to Polemarchus.

<sup>2</sup> For P.'s attitude to Th. see the interesting ideas of Sparshott in *U. Tor. Qu.* 1957.

<sup>3</sup> And subsequently in great detail by J. P. Maguire in *Phron.* 1971. See also Joseph, 'The Argument with Thras.', *A. and M. Phil.* 15-40.

them, or simply to earn wages. S. replies that, *qua* shepherd, his job is the welfare of the sheep and nothing else: whatever his other purposes, they are not relevant to his shepherd's art, any more than the fact a doctor is paid for his services invalidates the statement that the aim of medicine is the health of the patient.<sup>1</sup>

Satisfied that justice is not to be identified with the interest of the stronger party, S. turns to a further claim of Th., that the unjust man has the better life. Rejecting moral categories, Th. has called the just man a simpleton and justice common sense or good policy (εὐβουλία 348d).

(a)<sup>2</sup> No association for a common purpose, from Moral Rearmament to the Mafia, can succeed if each member acts unjustly towards the others, pursuing his own selfish ends by hook or crook. 'Honour among thieves' is necessary for any united action, and even within the individual injustice does not lose this power of paralysing through internal conflict.

(b) Everything has its proper function, e.g. tools and bodily organs like eyes and ears. Consequently each has its own excellence (*aretē*)<sup>3</sup> which enables it to perform that function (sharpness in the knife, keen sight in the eye). The *psyche* of man is no exception: it has its function (human living), and the *aretē* which enables it to perform this function in the best possible manner is justice. So the just man, not the unjust, lives well and therefore is prosperous and happy.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This account (amplified in vol. III, esp. 95 f.) differs radically from that of Adkins in *M. and R.* pp. 273 ff., which in my opinion overlooks the opening given to S. by Th.'s insistence that a ruler should only be considered *qua* ruler, i.e. as an ideal. He also calls Th. 'Callicles *redivivus*', whereas I say (III, 97) that Th.'s theory is 'essentially different from that of Callicles'. The reader must judge. (There is also T. Y. Henderson, 'In Defense of Th.', in *Am. Ph. Q.* 1970.) Sparshott (*Monist* 1966, 436) objects that a shepherd aims not at the welfare of the sheep but at their marketability, but this distinction sounds anachronistic. Ancient Greece was innocent of battery hens or factory farms. The healthiest, 'happiest' sheep would also fetch the highest price. (Since writing this I see that the same point has occurred to Penner, *Exegesis* 145 n. 12.)

<sup>2</sup> S.'s first argument, omitted here, depends again on the *technē* analogy, and its effect is gained by playing on the different connotations of words like *sophos* (technically trained and 'wise') and *agathos* (morally good and good at anything), which we know already and which are hardly reproducible outside contemporary Greek. Cornford omits it in his translation but gives a clear explanation of it (p. 32).

<sup>3</sup> For *aretē* see vol. III, 252 f.

<sup>4</sup> S. plays on the ambiguity of εὖ ζῆν (cf. *Prot.* 351b; as elsewhere of εὖ πράττειν) which in ordinary Greek idiom could mean to live in prosperity and happiness, even ease and luxury (*Od.* 17.423, *Soph. Ph.* 505), as well as to live a morally good life. On the argument from function one may mention Thayer's article in *PQ* 1964.

## *Main problem approached and stated*

*The adversary's case completed: Glaucon and Adeimantus (357a–367e).* Thrasymachus has argued from premises commonly accepted in the fifth century (and in Plato's time no less) as realistic,<sup>1</sup> and the counter-arguments of S. are not calculated to convert him. Nor are they new, except the bare mention of internal conflict at 352a foreshadowing the divisions of the soul in book 4. He simply retires with a contemptuous shrug. ('Enjoy your feast-day treat.') But this will not do for Plato's two brothers. They are as disgusted as S. with the way their contemporaries acquiesce in the immoral thesis that power itself confers the *right* to plunder, murder or hold others in subjection for one's own profit, and that whoever acquires and uses it in this way achieves the best life has to offer. But they have it daily dinned into their ears with arguments even more compelling than those Thrasymachus had used – indeed he gave up much too soon – and want to be given a final answer. They will therefore put the case for evil in its strongest and most extreme form. That case need not be repeated here (see vol. III, 97–9). The upshot is a demand that S. prove justice to be good in itself, for its own sake as well as its consequences (358a). He must explain 'what justice and injustice are, and what each can effect in and by itself, by its presence in the soul' (358b).<sup>2</sup> No account must be taken of external reputation, rewards or punishments, so we assume that neither gods nor men are aware of the just man's worth nor detect the wickedness of the unjust. Let the unjust prosper and be respected, and the just be (as would very likely happen) misunderstood, humiliated, tortured and killed (a reminder of what was said about Socrates himself in the *Gorgias*, 521b–d). Prove that, even so, justice brings more good than injustice to the man himself who possesses it, that it pays to *be*, not merely to *seem*, good.

<sup>1</sup> See the evidence of Thucydides in vol. III, 84–8.

<sup>2</sup> Literally what 'power' (δύναμις) each has. That this is not the same thing as justice as 'an ultimate value, an end in itself' is pointed out by Versényi, *Philos.* 1971, 237.

(2) THE SEARCH FOR JUSTICE BEGINS: ORIGIN AND  
ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL ORDER (2.368c-374E)

*The state as the individual magnified* (368b-369c). The task is formidable. S. suggests that since, as they agree, justice is to be found in communities as a whole as well as in individuals, it may be easier to conduct the investigation first on the larger scale. Are they prepared for the considerable task of imagining a city<sup>1</sup> being built up from the beginning, to see at what point or points justice enters into it? They are.

The facile assumption here that 'justice can belong to a single man and to a whole city' (368e), and is the same in both, has naturally come under fire. The parallel is maintained in detail in book 4, but certainly not to the extent of rendering otiose the criticisms in Grote's splendid chapter on it (*Pl.* III, xxxiv), which should still be read. Modern philosophers add the linguistic point that a word may mean different things to us in different contexts, e.g. 'Torquay is a healthy town' and 'Jones is a healthy man'.<sup>2</sup> But as Cross and Woosley go on to say, the present case can hardly be dismissed as no more than a linguistic *faux pas*, for Plato's belief in the literal congruity of individual and state is the basis of his whole political philosophy. In defending Plato against Grote, Adam (I, 92) used 'the historical argument that Plato was concerned 'to cement the union between citizen and state, which was rapidly dissolving in his day'. A better historical explanation is the wider one, well expressed by Jacques, that 'for the Greek, ethics and politics were one and the distinction we make between them would have seemed artificial to him. The goodness

<sup>1</sup> It is as well to use this word occasionally to remind us that the 'state' being discussed is the *polis*, the autonomous city and its agricultural environs, counting its population in thousands; and *politeia* – polity, state – is the organization of this compact unit. We all know this, but it is easy to forget it and assess P.'s statements as if they applied to the modern nation-state with its millions.

<sup>2</sup> Cross and Woosley, *Comm.* 75f. I have emphasized elsewhere that S. and P. were not unaware that men attached different meanings to the same words; they simply thought it harmful. Nor can it well be denied that if in every country men meant the same thing by, say, 'democracy', the world would be a happier place. But that was in cases where the reference was the same, e.g. 'justice means taking all you can get' (Calicles) or 'justice means obeying the laws' (Antiphon). The way in which the meaning is altered through a change of reference may well have been something beyond the linguistic philosophy of S. and P.

## *The search for justice begins*

of individuals was closely related to the goodness of the state in which they lived; the good life demanded the good society in which to express itself and the good society promoted and made possible the good life.<sup>1</sup> It is this Greek conception which Plato here carries to its logical conclusion in the idea of the 'organic state', 'an artificial man', as Hobbes called it, 'though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended'; an idea which underwent some remarkable developments in later Europe.<sup>2</sup>

*The 'city of pigs' (369b-372d).* A city arises because no man is self-sufficient. Each has more basic needs – food, shelter, clothing – than he can satisfy himself, so a number form a settlement together in order to share out the necessary tasks; for it is better to adopt a principle of division of labour than that each should try to do everything for himself. Everyone is naturally fitted for one trade rather than another, and specialization increases efficiency. Besides producers we shall need shopkeepers, for the farmer must not neglect his work to sit in the market-place till someone wants to buy, and even a small community can hardly get on without some imports, and exports to pay for them. In the end the minimal city includes farmers, builders, weavers, leather-workers, smiths and other craftsmen to make tools, herdsmen, merchants, retailers and unskilled wage-earning labourers. It is now complete.

In this account society originates from purely material, economic needs. There is no mention of natural gregariousness or need for companionship as bringing men together. So far it resembles Protagoras's theory, though he attributes communal life to the need for protection from wild beasts, the basic necessities having been secured previously (*Prot.* 322a-b, vol. III, 65f.). No germ of the spiritual concord and unity which Plato regarded as essential to the preservation of a city is present in this primitive sketch. Nor is it intended to be

<sup>1</sup> J. H. Jacques, *Rep., a Beginner's Guide* 51. A good example of this is the last few pages of Aristotle's *Nic. Eth.* (from 1179a33).

<sup>2</sup> Guthrie in *Living Heritage* 62f. The description in Hobbes, from the preface to *Leviathan*, is quoted by Grote, *Pl.* III, 123. For an explicit analogy in the *Rep.* between state and human body, see 462c-d.

## *The Republic*

historical. Its order is rather logical. 'That is to say, he takes society roughly as it is and begins at what seems its lowest point, at that aspect of society in which it is an organization for the satisfaction of certain physical wants.'<sup>1</sup> This seems certain from its extreme schematic brevity, and is also suggested by the use of normative rather than factual language: each man *must* (δεῖ) perform his own job (369e), a man would *do better* to stick to one job (370b), we shall *need*... (371a).

To discover where in this elementary city lie justice and injustice, we must first consider their way of life. Of this S. paints an idyllic picture. They have corn and wine, houses and clothes, and he sees them reclining with their children on natural beds of fragrant boughs, eating loaves and fine cakes off clean leaves, then when the wine goes round, wearing garlands, hymning the gods, and enjoying one another's company. They live within their means and avoid poverty and war. Urged by Glaucon he allows them some relish with their bread – salt, olives, cheese, vegetables – as well as a country dessert with the wine, of figs, peas, acorns and the like. So after a healthy and peaceful life, they will die old and bequeath the same existence to their children.

*The inflamed city* (372d–374c). At this point occurs the first of many carefully contrived interruptions to the main argument. Before S. can proceed with his search for justice, Glaucon exclaims that what he has provided is fit only for a city of pigs, lacking the recognized comforts of life such as couches, tables to eat off, and civilized food. S. replies that in his opinion what he has described is the 'true and healthy city'.<sup>2</sup> It seems that what they have to study is not that, but a 'luxurious' city, one 'suffering from inflammation'. This may be no bad thing, for such a city may well reveal the origin of justice and injustice in communities. It at once becomes a much larger affair, for in addition to necessities and simple pleasures it demands – besides furniture – delicacies, cosmetics, courtesans, the fine arts and precious

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship, *Lectures* 69. See also the rest of what he has to say on pp. 69–70.

<sup>2</sup> This disposes of the surprising statement of Cross and Woodley (*Comm.* 79) that he 'does not object to the suggestion that what he has described is a "city of swine"'.

## *The search for justice begins*

materials like gold and ivory. Some must hunt and fish, there will be sculptors, painters, poets, actors, dancers, fashion-experts. There must be many more servants – tutors, nurses, ladies' maids, cooks and others – and the luxurious life will increase the need for doctors. Above all, with its growing population and demands this state will find its own territory inadequate, and, we must assume, will have neighbours like itself. Expansion means war, so we must add a standing army, since we have agreed on the principle 'one man one job', and efficient defence more than anything calls for continuous attention and practice.

*Which is Plato's 'ideal state'?* The rest of the political part of the *Republic* is concerned with this second city, regularly referred to nowadays as 'Plato's ideal state'. Yet it is here introduced as 'inflamed' and explicitly denied the title of true and healthy. What is the position? The first city (which is not so very primitive, since it has metals, currency, exporters and retailers) is certainly spoken of by S. in glowing terms, reminiscent of accounts of the golden age in Empedocles and others, with which it shares the features of vegetarianism and absence of war. It is only in deference to Glaucon's objection, and because a sick city may better reveal the origin of both justice and injustice, that S. agrees to abandon it.<sup>1</sup> Nor has there been any obvious irony in his description. So far there seems no doubt at all that only the 'true and healthy' city can serve as an ideal pattern, but as we read on, this becomes less clear. In book 4, after the organization of the second state has been outlined, S. says (427e), 'I take it that our city, having been correctly established,<sup>2</sup> is perfectly good'; and again in book 5 (472d), 'We have been engaged in constructing verbally the pattern of a good city', where his argument is that it is no criticism of a theoretical ideal that it cannot be realized in practice. This brings to mind the well-known passage at the end of book 9

<sup>1</sup> Some, like Strauss in *J. Metaph.* 12 (1958–9), 420f., write as if it were S., or Plato himself, who called it a city of pigs. H. Neumann on the other hand (*AJP* 1969, 484f.), emphasizing that it is abandoned only at G.'s insistence, adduces as evidence that the 'ideal state' is only a second-best, the fact that even the philosopher-rulers can only serve by embracing a lie. But the significance of the *γενναῖον ψεύδος* is more complex. See pp. 457–9, 462–4, below.

<sup>2</sup> To render thus, rather than allow real conditional force to *εἴπερ γὰρ* as Lee does (contrast Cornford), is probably correct. ('If we are right in thinking...') Cf. 427e7.



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that the city 'is perhaps laid up as a pattern in the heavens' (pp. 543 f. below).

How has this change come about? J. P. Maguire writes that Plato proceeds to complete the ideal state 'first by evolving the "luxurious" society from the primitive society, in order to introduce an army; *and then by evolving the "purged" state from the luxurious society*, in order to introduce a specifically ruling element which will be able to organize the whole'.<sup>1</sup> He does not quote, but presumably has in mind 399e, where S., after his drastic curtailment of poetry, drama and music, exclaims with his favourite oath, 'By the dog! Without realizing it we have been re-purging the city which a little while ago we called over-luxurious. Let's go on and complete the process.' The process is never complete however, if only because they never get rid of war. We can hardly call the introduction of an army a step towards the ideal state, when the reason for it is aggression prompted by greed. The cause of war, says Plato, whatever its effects, is the desire for unlimited material possessions, the same that is at the bottom of most evil in cities, individual and social (373d-e). As he put it bluntly in the *Phaedo* (66c), 'All wars are made to get money.' Yet in the 'ideal state' it is the military class which has the highest character, combining fierce courage with philosophic gentleness, and from which the rulers are selected. The whole population of the 'city of pigs' has become the third class, which has no part in the government. This is no reflection on the earlier society, in which government was evidently unnecessary. Unity and concord do not have to be imposed on the simple, but only on the complex.

We have seen that in later books Plato describes as a pattern of goodness the city which began in book 2 as one unhealthy through luxurious excess. That it has meanwhile undergone purgation only explains this in part, for it is only partly purged. Plato effects a change of ground, accomplished dramatically by the contrast between the over-simple Socrates and Glaucon the apostle of modern culture and elegance.<sup>2</sup> Socrates describes a society of innocents, peaceable and

<sup>1</sup> *CJ* 1965, 148. Italics mine.

<sup>2</sup> For G.'s character see Jowett, II, 9. The simple intellectualism of S. is no doubt historical; for an example of it see vol. III, 458.

## *Selection of guardians, education of the young*

friendly, content with what nature sends them and never outrunning their resources. But Glaucon and Plato know that most men are just not like that. Human nature is complex, and ruled by appetites and passions quite as much as by reason. One may conceive of an ideal state either as a society of perfect individuals or as the best conceivable organization for men as they are. It is not surprising that the former conception should occur to Socrates first, for as Cornford said,<sup>1</sup> it is the logical outcome of his mission to his fellow-citizens as described in the *Apology*. He adapted his message to fifth-century Athens, but had he been invited to start from scratch, these simple people, knowing their own limitations and therefore possessed of the great virtue *sophrosynē*, would no doubt have been his ideal. In the 'city fit for pigs', therefore, I see Plato harking back to the master for whom he still felt respect and affection, whereas his own course, pursued in the following books, is 'to take individual human nature as we find it, and to construct a social order that will make the best of it as it is and as it seems likely to remain' (Cornford *l.c.*). Even that does not represent his ultimate purpose, which is to analyse human character in order to discover where *in individual souls* lie the seeds of justice and injustice, virtue and vice. Naturally therefore, if this is to be seen first in the 'big letters' of the state, they must reflect human nature as it really is. This, I hasten to say, does not settle the question whether the *Republic* was intended as practical politics or simply 'a pattern laid up in the heavens'. To that we shall come later (pp. 483 ff. below).

### (3) SELECTION OF GUARDIANS AND EDUCATION OF THE YOUNG (2.374E-3.412A)

#### (a) *Selection* (374e-376c)

We have already noted that, in spite of their unpromising introduction, the military (now called 'guardians') represent the highest type of citizen. Indeed, given the qualifications demanded, it is obvious that the statesmen could be chosen from no other class. As the city's defenders, they must be physically strong and quick, and of high

<sup>1</sup> In 'P.'s Commonwealth', *Unwritten Phil.* 58f.

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courageous spirit. Yet characters of this sort are apt to be fierce and aggressive. What if they should tend to attack both each other and the people they are supposed to protect? Let us call them the watch-dogs of the city, and we may take heart from their canine counterparts. There *are* creatures who are savage to some and gentle to others, and the criterion is *knowledge*, for dogs will attack a stranger even if he has done them no harm, and welcome anyone familiar even if he has shown them no kindness. In this the dog shows the rudiments of a philosophic nature,<sup>1</sup> for philosophy is nothing but love of knowledge and learning, and this our guardians must have if they are to behave peaceably towards their neighbours. The good guardian then must combine these qualities: physical fitness, a high spirit and a philosophic nature.

This passage contains in a tight bud much of what will unfold into flower as the talk proceeds, when its full import will appear. Briefly, it implies that the perfect guardian is the perfect man, for his character must be a delicate balance of what will later be described in detail, the three main types of impulse in the *psyche*, physical, 'spirited' (for which Plato already uses the same term, θυμοειδές, as in the systematic account) and intellectual.

### *(b) Education of the young (2.376c-3.412a)*

How are these paragons to be brought up? That is the next question – provided, S. reminds them, it will assist 'the purpose of the whole investigation' (376c), namely the discovery of how justice and injustice are engendered in a city. Adeimantus expects it will, so they proceed, as S. rather strikingly puts it (376d): 'Like people engaged in telling stories (*mythoi*), in story form and at leisure, to educate these men in words (i.e. in talk, in imagination not reality).'<sup>2</sup>

The education outlined follows the traditional Greek division into physical (*gymnastikē*) and cultural (*musikē*), most attention being paid to a reformation of the latter. The principles on which it is based, summed up by Plato at the end (400c-402e), represent a characteristi-

<sup>1</sup> I hope it is unnecessary to remind that P. had a sense of humour.

<sup>2</sup> To render the Greek, with words like μυθολογούντες, μῦθος, in modern language is not easy, but I have tried to represent it as closely as possible.

## *Selection of guardians, education of the young*

cally Greek association of ideas, typified by the word *kalon* (pp. 177f. above): that is, the association of aesthetic values, especially the formal qualities of symmetry, proportion, rhythm, which in Greek eyes gave unity to a complex whole of parts and satisfaction to the eye and ear, with moral excellence. In considering Plato's drastic concrete proposals it is essential to have these primary aims in mind, which are therefore worth quoting.

Thus, then, excellence of form and content in discourse and of musical expression and rhythm, and grace of form and movement, all go with . . . a nature in which goodness of character has been well and truly established. So, if our young men are to do their proper work in life, they must follow after these qualities wherever they may be found. And they are to be found in every form of workmanship, such as painting, weaving, embroidery, architecture, the making of furniture; also in the human frame and in all the works of nature: in all these grace and seemliness may be present or absent. And the absence of grace, rhythm, harmony is nearly allied to baseness of thought and expression and baseness of character; whereas their presence goes with that moral excellence and self-mastery of which they are the embodiment. . . . We must seek out those craftsmen whose instinct guides them to whatsoever is lovely and gracious; so that our young men, dwelling in a wholesome climate, may drink in good from every quarter, whence, like a breeze bearing health from happy regions, some influence from noble (*kala*) works constantly falls upon eye and ear from childhood upward, and imperceptibly draws them into sympathy and harmony with the beauty (*kalon*) of reason, whose impress they take.

Hence the decisive importance of education in poetry and music: *rhythm and harmony sink deep into the recesses of the soul* and take the strongest hold there, bringing that *grace of body and mind* which is only to be found in one who has been brought up in the right way.<sup>1</sup>

(i) *Cultural education* (2.376e-3.403c)

(α) *Stories (= poetry)* (377a-398b)

*Subject-matter* (ἃ λεκτέον) (377a-392c). Children receive their earliest education by being told stories, mostly (in Greece) through

<sup>1</sup> 400d-401a, 401c-e, in Cornford's translation. (My italics.) Some readers may be relieved to hear that, though not mentioned here, sums and geometry will also be begun in childhood (7.536d-e, p. 526 below). But in a later book P. explains that this education was aimed at moral excellence rather than knowledge. Purely intellectual disciplines are reserved for adult guardians who have passed further tests (p. 521 below).

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poetry. With many examples from Homer downwards, Plato shows how they must be purged, to have a good effect on character at this most impressionable age. First, their theology is bad. The divine nature is good and cannot be the source of evil, nor can it change, for any change could only be for the worse, so stories depicting gods as immoral and cruel, and as adopting various disguises, must go. Nor must heroes, regarded as models of nobility, be seen to indulge unsuitable emotions such as fear of death or immoderate grief or mirth.<sup>1</sup> The stories must inculcate truthfulness, self-control, courage and endurance, and discourage avarice and arrogance. This section ends with another reminder that the main aim is to uncover justice and injustice. The discussion so far has been confined to gods, demi-gods and heroes, because in applying it to human conduct our natural instinct is to forbid the poets to suggest that injustice pays and justice does not; and yet we cannot do that until we have decided the point ourselves by discovering the true nature of both.

*Form* (ὥς λεκτέον) (392c–398b). Here Plato contrasts the narrative and dramatic, or mimetic, methods of presenting a story. They can be mixed, as in Homer, whose tales are told in his own words interspersed with what purport to be the actual words spoken by his characters. Tragedy and comedy consist entirely of direct representation (in Greek *mimesis*). The principle on which he bases his hostility to the mimetic arts (acting, miming, clowning etc.) is enunciated at 395d: 'Acts of *mimesis*, if persisted in from youth onwards, entrench themselves in one's habits and character – of body, voice and state of mind alike.' One comes to resemble what one

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship (p. 96) observes that if P.'s censorship is not to seem absurd we must remember how prone to violent emotions, lack of self-respect and a tendency to forget themselves his fellow-Greeks were. Is it not rather a question of the difference between a heroic ethic and that of a later age? We too do not find Achilles a very edifying spectacle when on the death of his friend he weeps, lies writhing in the dust, pours it over his head and face and tears his hair (*Il.* 24.10f., 18.23–7, partly quoted at 388a–b). We do not expurgate Homer on this account because we do not regard his heroes as models for our own conduct. What we do have to remember, to understand P.'s outburst, is the survival in his time of the conception of poets as moral educators. (See pp. 205 f.) If every child was made familiar with stories like the castration of Kronos by Ouranos, it is not too far-fetched to compare the protests made nowadays against the portrayal of violence and sex in the cinema and on television.

## *Selection of guardians, education of the young*

acts, or even sees acted.<sup>1</sup> The versatility of throwing oneself into many parts is itself inimical to the strict specialization enjoined for the new state, and of course a potential guardian should not act the part either of a bad character or of one engaged in an occupation unsuited to his status. Plato's treatment of poetry depends so much on current educational practice, and on the typical Greek response to rhapsodic or dramatic performances, that it is difficult for us to understand his motives. What cannot fail to strike one is the flattering terms in which, in spite of all, he speaks of these arts. Any visitor versed in them, and wishing to show his skill, must be treated with reverence as servant of a god as well as a giver of wonderful pleasure, anointed with myrrh and crowned (398a). Only then will he be escorted to the frontier with the explanation that the entertainment of such as he is not permitted. Returning to the subject in book 10, Plato goes so far as to compare this attitude with that of a lover who forces himself to renounce a passion which he realizes is doing him no good (607e), and this seems to represent his own position.

(β) *Music* (398c–400c).<sup>2</sup> This is treated under the two heads of mode and rhythm. S., being no musician, asks Glaucon to tell him the names of the modes and suggests consulting Damon<sup>3</sup> about the appropriate rhythms. The important points are, first, the general Greek belief in the effect of music on character, and secondly that it is here associated with words – it is sung poetry that Plato has in mind – and so, naturally, the music must suit the words. This already determines the preferred types. Limitation of modes and rhythms brings limitation of instruments, which are confined to the simpler stringed kind. More

<sup>1</sup> For the way in which a Greek reciter and his audience both surrendered themselves to the characters and events of the poem, see *Ion* 535b–e (mentioned on p. 203 above). A rhapsode was as much of an actor as a tragedian. (Television may again provide a parallel.) Conversely one may look at 466e, where P. advocates taking children to the battlefield to see what goes on, on the analogy of craftsmen's children who learn the job first by watching how it is done and helping in small ways. Imitation becomes identification. Ch. 4 of Margaret Mead's *Continuities in Cultural Evolution* (on learning by empathy, invitation and identification) makes interesting reading in this connexion.

<sup>2</sup> In the *Gorg.* (501e–502c) music (of pipe and lyre), choric dancing and poetry (dithyrambic and tragic) were condemned along with rhetoric as 'pandering' (κολακείαι).

<sup>3</sup> For Damon, see vol. III, 35 n. 1.

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elaborate stringed, and all wind-instruments (associated with orgiastic rites) are rejected.<sup>1</sup>

This section ends with an emphatic rejection of the pleasures of sex, whose violent and frenzied character is at the opposite extreme from the discipline, moderation and superiority of intellect which we look for in our guardians.<sup>2</sup>

### (ii) *Physical education, with appendix on doctors and lawyers* (403c–410b).

A sound body does not of itself produce a good *psyche*, whereas a good *psyche* will look after the excellence of the body. This is S.'s excuse for giving only rough guide-lines and leaving details for those whose minds will have already been trained. The supreme importance of the *psyche* is again emphasized at the end (410c): the established duality of education, cultural and physical, is not really aimed at mind and body respectively, but entirely at the mind.

Drunkenness<sup>3</sup> and recourse to prostitutes are forbidden. Diet must be simple, but not that of a professional athlete, which induces hebetude and danger of ill health when strict training is relaxed. Soldiers must be sturdy to withstand changes of food, water and climate. Austerity in physical things produces health of body as simplicity of musical harmonies and rhythms produces a disciplined character. Moral licence and disease go hand in hand and crowd the law-courts and doctors' surgeries – a sure sign of bad education. It is disgusting to see people committing wrongs and then resorting to law to escape the consequences. Similarly medicine should be for wounds and minor, unavoidable ailments, not for those whose habits

<sup>1</sup> On this subject there is a book by M. Moutsopoulos, *La musique dans l'œuvre de P.*

<sup>2</sup> The context makes it clear that this refers to the current fashion of homosexual relations. P. certainly does not mean to prevent the guardians from breeding, though their intercourse with women is very strictly regulated (pp. 481 f. below).

<sup>3</sup> The word μέθη (403e) may mean either drink or drunkenness. If P. is enjoining total abstinence he changed his mind in the *Laws*, where he advocates drinking-parties, properly supervised, as an educational device and test of character. Yet even there, if the alternative were unrestricted indulgence, he would forbid all strong drink to magistrates in office and serving soldiers (the equivalent of the guardians) and certain other classes (674a–b). Other translators however confine the ban to intoxication, and this is more likely because at its previous occurrence (398e), to which P. himself refers us back, it goes with two other abstractions softness and idleness.

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have made them unfit to be useful members of society: a good doctor does not believe in prolonging a useless life. In the same way the morally incurable should be put to death.<sup>1</sup> An odd little note adds that whereas experience of illness in himself may prove useful to a doctor, a judge or juryman will not be improved by having shared the weaknesses of the wicked, but should be of an age to have observed plenty of it in other people. Properly educated, then, the guardians will need doctors rarely and lawyers never.

### *Summing-up (410b–412a)*

The primary purpose of this whole education is to stimulate the 'spirited' element, preponderance of which is the mark of the guardian class as a whole. But it must not get out of hand. Guardians must be brave without ferocity, philosophic without softness, these contrary qualities being harmonized to produce a nature truly civilized – a remarkable echo (whether intentional or not) of Pericles's idealization of the Athenian character: 'love of beauty without extravagance, of culture (*philosophia*) without softness' (Thuc. 2.40.1).

### *A few problems may trouble a reader of this section*

(i) *Is the education meant for the guardians alone?* As part of his general case (with which I agree) that the state is only auxiliary to the discussion of justice in the individual, Hoerber (*Theme* 57–9) argued that

the discourse on education is rather a treatment of the principles of elementary education in general, than an outline of a specific education for a specialized class in a particular state... Supposedly setting out to outline the education of the warrior class, his interest in the state is not even great enough to compel him to stick to his alleged aim.

Nevertheless there is never any possible doubt of Plato's intention. That the pupils are to be guardians is not only made clear at the start; it is repeated many times throughout the section.<sup>2</sup> Doubtless

<sup>1</sup> Murphy notes (*Interpr.* 29) that compassion is not to be found among the Platonic virtues. I suppose the nearest to it is that quality of gentleness which the guardians must display towards the rest of the citizens, and for which Plato uses the words *πρῶτος* and *ἡμερος*.

<sup>2</sup> To be precise, the word 'guardian' itself recurs ten times, at 378c, 387c, 388e, 394e, 395b, 398e, 401c, 402c, 403a, 410a; and 404a uses the periphrasis 'soldierly athletes'. In addition reference is made to their behaviour in, and training for, battle (386b, 404b), and they are said



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there will be an overlap: Plato could not have viewed with indifference the prospect of the children of artisans and businessmen being stuffed with false and harmful notions about gods and heroes, and in fact it is guardians who will oversee the education of all the rest.<sup>1</sup> Hoerber's main argument, that Plato speaks of the poets and others being kept out of the whole city, whereas if he were only concerned with potential guardians it would be sufficient to specify the areas specially set apart for them, is not very cogent. Even after these areas are assigned to them (which is not yet), it is never said that they will be confined to barracks all the time, and indeed some of their duties (e.g. in education and discipline, 415 d-e) would seem to compel the presence among the other citizens at least of those who become rulers; and a city full of poets and rhapsodes declaiming their heresies might be dangerous even for a guardian. Plato is only too conscious of their seductive power. And certainly the guardian would hear the forbidden types of music, so the relaxation of the ban on wind instruments in favour of the shepherd's simple pipe (Hoerber p. 58) does not mean that the whole educational scheme is intended for every citizen. In favour of his thesis Hoerber also mentions 389b-d, where Plato says that guardians must have a high regard for truth. Falsehood may only be used by the rulers in the interests of the state. For another citizen to lie to a ruler is as detrimental as for a patient to lie to his doctor about his condition or a sailor to his captain on matters of importance to the voyage. If then a ruler catch 'one of a craft, seer or healer or worker in wood',<sup>2</sup> lying, he will punish him. The rulers, of course, will be chosen from the guardians, and must naturally be taught both their own standards of truth and those which they have to impose on the populace.

The answer to our question, then, remains as given by the passages quoted in n. 2, p. 455, in spite of a consideration which, though not mentioned by Hoerber, might be thought even more serious. The

to be those who must have nothing to do with manual work (396a-b). Hoerber says nothing of these references. Neither does Vlastos, who also claims that the education (or 'psychological conditioning' as he calls it) is directed at all the citizens (*Plato* II, 93). There may be a lack of decision here in P. himself.

<sup>1</sup> 424b-e, οἱ ἐπιμεληταὶ τῆς πόλεως. The reference to proper conduct in private business transactions shows that here the whole citizen-body is meant.

<sup>2</sup> A quotation from Homer, *Od.* 17.383.

## *Selection of guardians, education of the young*

education starts in infancy, but if they<sup>1</sup> are 'to pick out people with the sort of natures suitable for the defence of the city', and fit to be trained as such (cf. pp. 449f. above), would not the selection have to wait until they are a little older? Unfortunately Plato seems confused about this, and the kindest thing one can say is that he wished to give the talk an air of naturalness by allowing new ideas to strike S. from time to time which would modify what has gone before. One such idea thrown at us later on is that the entire society will at its inception consist of children under ten, though somehow there will already exist philosopher-rulers to organize their education (540d-e). Can all this really, as many think, have been intended as practical politics?

(ii) *Plato's attitude to truth.* First it must be said that the Greek *pseudos* (a. and n. 'untrue' and 'untruth') need not have the pejorative implication of our 'false' or 'lying'. Its neutral use is illustrated at the beginning of the section on education (377e): we start by telling children stories (*mythoi*), which are in general *pseudos* ('fictitious' Jowett, 'fiction' Cornford and Lee), though they contain some truth. Plato's own demand is that, though a myth may be invented, it should be true in the deeper sense of not misrepresenting the divine or heroic character.

At 382a S. says that gods and men all detest 'true (or real) falsehood', by which he means 'nothing high-flown' but simply ignorance or misapprehension in one's own mind (over-dramatized by some commentators as 'the lie in the soul'). By contrast, 'spoken falsehood' may in human affairs be useful, e.g. against an enemy or to save a friend from his folly. In such cases it may be likened to drugs or medicine, an analogy developed at 389b: as medicine must only be administered by a doctor, so only the trained ruler may employ falsehood, and for the good of the state. An example occurs much later, when marriages are to be secretly manipulated for eugenic ends. To get the best results the rulers will need to use 'frequent falsehood

<sup>1</sup> Who 'they' would be in reality is comfortably vague. S. speaks sometimes of 'you' (i.e. Glaucon and Adeimantus) as organizing it all, sometimes of 'we'. It is one of the many indications that the whole scheme is a purely theoretical exercise (pp. 483ff. below).

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and deceit...for the good of the ruled: we did say that all such practices were useful as medicines'.<sup>1</sup>

These passages have naturally led to a lot of moral headshaking.<sup>2</sup> The most interesting comment is that of Alvin Gouldner, who as a sociologist has no classical or Platonic axe to grind. The following extracts may stimulate a reader to read the rest (*EP* 332):

Even if the scholar is concerned with truth alone, it is conceivable that its pursuit at any one time can impair its continued pursuit at later times... If, however, he accepts other values as transcending the truth, such as human survival or social cohesion, then is he not under pressure, as Plato is, to conceal truths that are at variance with these other values, and perhaps even to assert things untrue because they foster such values? Insofar as the scholar takes responsibility for maintaining or furthering any social system, be it one already in existence or one contemplated, his commitment to the truth must be limited and conditional. Truth cannot then be an absolute value. Insofar as the scholar makes an unconditional commitment to truth, however, he must be prepared to loosen or surrender his attachment to any given society, to limit or reject his responsibility for its welfare, and to reduce or liquidate his investment in his other social roles.

Gouldner mentions the modern dilemma of the physicist whose search for knowledge may result in the development of weapons which will annihilate his society, and with it the opportunity to pursue his research. Plato was spared that moral problem, and would never have admitted that the philosopher's undoubted responsibility to society could limit in any way his own devotion to the discovery of truth. It is this that he has in mind when, much later (6.485c) he says that the philosopher-ruler is characterized by truthfulness<sup>3</sup> and an unwillingness to tolerate falsehood, which he hates just as he loves truth. At 490a-c it is repeated that his passion for truth will make him hate falsehood, that he must pursue truth 'everywhere and in every way', and that where truth leads no evils can follow. Plato

<sup>1</sup> 5.459c-d. The 'noble fiction' or 'grand myth' of 414b-c is in a different category (pp. 462ff. below).

<sup>2</sup> For an outright and forceful condemnation of Plato's attitude to truth, see Popper, *OS* vol. 1, esp. p. 50 and ch. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Actually ἀψεῦδεια, complete absence of *pseudos*, which is even more forceful than its counterpart ἀλήθεια.

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is thinking of the philosopher's single-minded search for reality, his personal release from 'true falsehood'. Yet one cannot help wondering whether, as he writes these stirring words, he still has in mind the distinction between intellectual and spoken falsehood and the propriety of a medicinal use of the latter.

(iii) *The Forms in book 3?* The following passages are relevant.

At 401b–c Plato demands that poets should implant 'the image of good character', and other craftsmen should be sought 'who can track down the nature (*physis*) of the beautiful and graceful'.

402b–c. 'Neither we nor the guardians whom we are bringing up will be cultivated (*musikoi*) until we recognize the forms (*eidē*) of self-control, courage, liberality, high-mindedness and kindred virtues and their contraries, in the instances in which they inhere, and their copies (*eikones*) as well.'

The importance of these passages is as a reminder that the language of Plato's doctrine of Forms is ordinary language and can make ordinary non-Platonic sense,<sup>1</sup> so that it is not always easy to see when he has his own developed doctrine in mind and when not. Here there are three possibilities: (a) Plato is talking about the changeless, separately existing Forms of his own doctrine; (b) he is using *eidos* in one of its current senses as trait, character, sort or kind; (c) as Grube has it (*P.'s Th.* 235 n. 3), 'though the reader who was not familiar with the Platonic Forms could understand εἶδη σωφροσύνης [*eidē* of self-control] in the usual way as kinds of virtue, and "images" as nothing in particular, Glaucon who knows all about the theory (475e) and any reader in the same position is warned that the real μουσική [*musikē*] will come later and is not forgotten. To him εἰκόνες αὐτῶν – images of virtue – must mean these virtues as they appear in particular acts.'<sup>2</sup>

Cornford favoured (a), interpreting in the light of the full doctrine

<sup>1</sup> Immediately after the second, at 402d, he uses εἶδος in its radical sense of 'outward appearance'!

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Solmsen, *P.'s Th.* 74 n. 8: 'εἶδη may well be understood in the sense which it has in the technical theory of Ideas, the explanation of which Plato reserves for the later books. At the same time, it would make perfectly satisfactory sense for the uninitiated reader.'

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of Forms, but Adam was for (b).<sup>1</sup> We must not, he said, interpret book 2 in the light of book 7, where in any case the doctrine of Forms is reserved for philosophers. The 'images' or 'copies' (*eikones*) are representations of the virtues in poetry and the fine arts, so if *eidē* are the Forms, poetry must be a direct imitation of them, which contradicts book 10 (595c–598d).<sup>2</sup> Without necessarily following Adam's arguments, we must agree that Plato cannot here be talking about the Forms of his own philosophy. I doubt if he even intended a *double entendre*, though this is possible. The great majority of the guardians (let alone the poets and craftsmen) will never 'recognize Forms' in the full Platonic sense. That is to be the goal of a highly select minority after a rigorous fifteen-year training in mathematics and dialectic (537c, 539e and pp. 521 ff. below). Plato's present topic is the sort of work that poets and artists must produce for the edification of children of the whole guardian class. They must not portray bad character or ugliness but must be able to recognize and reproduce beauty and goodness in all their varieties (*eidē*). These must be reflected in their work, that the young guardians may learn to appreciate them. This is plain, comprehensible language, and I submit that it is all Plato intends us to see in his words. If he were conducting a seminar on the theory of Forms, and a pupil asked him how a mere poet or sculptor could 'recognize beauty', he would have said of course that they had only a true belief about the many beautiful things, not knowledge of the Beauty in which they all shared. But we are not at a seminar and for present purposes that is enough.

<sup>1</sup> Cornford, *Rep.* p. 86, Adam I, 168. According to Adam, Zeller (2.1.560 n.) also understood εἶδη here as the Platonic 'Ideas', but what he said is that P. when he wrote the earlier books had already evolved the theory (as no doubt he had), but does not definitely refer to it here 'because this was not the place for it'. It is remarkable how often one scholar's reference to another needs to be checked by first-hand inspection.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently it is all right to interpret bk 3 in the light of bk 10. (Grube does the same.) Weaknesses in Adam's note are his reliance on the clause 'in which they inhere' as showing that the forms in question are immanent not transcendent (cf. pp. 116 f. above), and his refusal to grant τὰ τῆς σωφροσύνης εἶδη its natural meaning (kinds or varieties) which it has for instance at 424c, εἶδος καὶνὸν μουσικῆς, without giving any reason why a virtue should not appear in more than one variety. That it does is just what causes the downfall of S.'s interlocutor in some of the early dialogues, who mentions a variety (or species) when asked to define the whole (or genus). ἀνδρεία, e.g., may be physical or moral (see *Laches*); ἀρετή in general may show itself differently in man or woman, ruler or subject, while remaining susceptible of a single generic definition.

## *Guardians and auxiliaries*

(iv) *Theology and the problem of evil.* Greek gods were no paragons of virtue, and in particular were capable of any cruelty towards an individual or community who happened to offend them. All this, Plato teaches, is the invention of lying poets. God is good – that is axiomatic – and all his acts are good and beneficial. ‘God<sup>1</sup> then, being good, cannot be responsible for all things, as most people say, but in human affairs for only a few, since we meet with much more evil than good. The good we must ascribe to God, but for the evil we shall have to find other causes’ (379b–c). Here he explicitly raises the question of the sources of evil. He is not concerned to answer it just now, but it should be remembered against the time when we find him in more philosophic, less pedagogic vein. Let us note, then, first, that he does not deny, nor seem likely to explain away, the existence of evil, and secondly, that whatever its cause, it is not from God.<sup>2</sup>

### (4) GUARDIANS AND AUXILIARIES: PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNMENT (3.412B–4.427C)

So far the guardians’ functions have been limited to defence and internal security, but since they are the finest characters in the city, it is natural that its government should be chosen from them. At any rate S. simply says (412b) that the next question is which of them shall rule. They must be older than the rest, wise and capable, and satisfy ‘us’ that they will all their lives regard the city’s interests as their own. To this end the guardians will from early childhood be tested for their resistance to violence, persuasion and the beguilement of pleasures and fears. Those who preserve their balance in these trials through childhood, youth and manhood will be given authority and honoured in life and death. It is they who should be called Guardians in the full sense (414a6 and b1),<sup>3</sup> and their function is to defend the

<sup>1</sup> Or ‘the divine’. P. uses sing. and pl. ‘with an indifference startling to the modern monotheist’ (Cornford, *Rep.* 66). Both this practice and a disbelief in the quarrelsome, immoral Olympians were probably widespread among his acquaintance. Glaucon agrees at once.

<sup>2</sup> The question of whether there are Forms of evils is mentioned on pp. 498 and 507 f. below. As noted earlier, the subject of evil is more prominent in later dialogues (esp. *Tht.* 176a ff., *Laws* 10, and *Tim.*), and fuller discussion will be more appropriate when we come to them.

<sup>3</sup> And will from now be frequently so called here, with capital G. Alternatively Plato refers to them as the rulers (ἄρχοντες). For the meaning of ἐπικούροι (auxiliaries) see Taylor, *PMW* 276.

state against external enemies and to preserve internal unity, so that no motive for civil strife ever arises. The rest of those hitherto called guardians are more properly auxiliaries who assist the rulers to carry out their decisions.

*The grand myth.* We now need, says S., one of those 'necessary falsehoods' spoken of earlier. Though it will be quite in the tradition ('nothing new', 414c), he is understandably doubtful of the chances of getting it believed, but he would like to persuade first the Guardians and soldiers and then the other citizens of two things. First, their nurture and education at our hands was all a dream. In reality they were formed and reared, and their arms and other possessions prepared, within the earth, which only sent them to live on her surface when completely formed. In practical terms they must regard their native land as a mother to be cherished and defended, and their fellow-citizens as brothers. Secondly, the myth will say, though all are brothers, 'the god who moulded them' put gold in the rulers, silver in the auxiliaries and iron and bronze in the farmers and craftsmen. So their different capacities are innate and in general will persist, but since all are so closely related, golden parents may have a child alloyed with silver or bronze, and vice versa. This must be watched for, and transfers between classes arranged by the rulers when necessary.

This *pseudos* (414b) in mythical form (415a) satisfies Plato's condition for an acceptable myth, namely that, though itself fiction, it should illustrate a truth; for he himself was convinced (as he will show in detail later) that the classification symbolized by the metals reflected human nature and was psychologically correct. The essentials of the myth are, as S. himself says, rooted in Greek tradition. The epithet 'Phoenician' which he gives it (414c) suggests that he had especially in mind the story of Cadmus<sup>1</sup> and of the Thebans as descendants of the men born, adult and fully armed, from the earth in which he sowed the serpent's teeth. But the idea of men as literally born from the earth (*gēgeneis*) was widespread in Greek literature, and in the more general form of the origin of all life from the same source

<sup>1</sup> Son of the King of Tyre. The earliest reference to the story of the dragon's teeth is Eur. *Phoen.* 657-75. Eisler's alternative suggestion (quoted by Popper, *OS* 272) is highly speculative.

found a niche in natural philosophy as well as myth.<sup>1</sup> Although, like any other female, Mother Earth needed a consort (the sky-god), the mention of 'the god who moulded them' looks more like a conflation of the parturition myth with the story that the first men were *moulded*<sup>2</sup> out of clay by Prometheus or other gods. According to Plato's own *Protagoras* (320d), this process took place within the earth.

Plato's myth comes even nearer home. The idea that *all* human life arose from one Mother, the earth, a genuinely Greek one, would logically lead to a belief in universal brotherhood. But Plato was an Athenian, and the Athenians made for themselves alone the proud claim that they were literally autochthonous, sprung from the soil on which they lived: 'Alone of the Greeks we can call her [Attica] not only native land but mother and nurse.'<sup>3</sup> However, by the middle of the fifth century the Athenian habit of wearing golden cicadas in their hair (a symbol of autochthony, *In the B.* 114 n. 16) was already obsolete, and it is not surprising that both S. himself and Glaucon feel doubtful of the prospects of imposing the myth on their imaginary citizens, though Glaucon thinks it might work in the second and subsequent generations. They might well be pessimistic, for this is not something that S. wants the Guardians and rulers in their all-seeing wisdom to impose on the rest: he would like above all to have them believe it themselves (414c and d). Yet these are men who have already been chosen for (among other virtues) their intelligence, and who in books 6 and 7 are to be philosophers possessing knowledge in the full Platonic sense in which it is contrasted with mere belief, and whose passion for truth will not allow them to entertain any form of falsehood. If they can be taken in by the myth, they have obviously not yet reached that stature, nor, when they do reach it, does S. deign a backward glance at his earlier hope of their credulity. But this is in

<sup>1</sup> For details see Guthrie, *In the B.* chh. 1 and 2. For the word (used by Plato at 414e6 and 415d7) in Aesch., Eur. and elsewhere, *ib.* 22f. Usually of course (as S. says himself, 414c) it refers to the distant past, and so P. takes it when he uses it again at *Pol.* 269b, with no propagandist motive. The metals P. himself connects later (8.546e) with Hesiod's four successive races. See also Frutiger, *Mythes* 235 f.

<sup>2</sup> The word *πλάττω* used here (415 a4), with its derivatives, is the regular one in such stories. See *In the B.* 27f. and 116f. n. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Isocr. *Paneg.* 24 (cf. *περί μητροῦς καὶ τροφῆς* at *Rep.* 414e); also Plato himself, *Menex.* 237d (pp. 315f. above). On local and universal autochthony, *In the B.* 23-6, and for the general belief in ancient and more recent times, Johnson in *JHI* 1960, 465 ff.



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keeping with the ethos of the whole conversation. As he truly said about an earlier question (394d), 'I don't know yet: we must go wherever the argument blows us.'

*Transfers on merit.* Each half of the myth has its moral attached. The moral of the metals allegory is not that it is necessary to keep the classes apart as castes based solely on birth. 'The first and chief commandment of the god' is that the Guardians watch more carefully over their own children than over anything else, and if they detect signs of bronze or iron in their composition, dismiss them without compunction to the farming and handworking class; and if a member of that class prove to contain silver or gold, he must be elevated to the auxiliaries or Guardians. This important proviso is often belittled as not seriously meant<sup>1</sup> on the grounds that either Plato makes no provision for carrying it out in practice or, as others think, he expressly rescinds it, or allows only for degrading, not promotion. Here are some texts, which show at least that he did not forget it.

4.423c-d. As we mentioned before, if a Guardian has an unworthy child he must be sent away, and if a good one is born from the others, he must be admitted to the Guardians. The idea behind this was that each of the other citizens too should be assigned to the one single job that is properly his own, and so be one man not many, and the city as a whole be by this means welded into a unity.

This formidable task, they agree, should be manageable for the Guardians once they have had the education planned for them.

5.468a. Cowards and deserters in war are to be made workmen or farmers.

As to the feasibility of these operations, one is apt to forget how tiny, in modern times, the whole city-state will be, and this would make them easier. In fact however, if lack of detailed planning is a sign that Plato was not in earnest, then the examples in Hoerber's *Theme of the Republic*, ch. 2 (and they are not exhaustive), are sufficient to show that none of the political proposals in the *Republic* are seriously

<sup>1</sup> Not by Taylor (*PMW* 275), Cornford (*P.'s C.*, *U. Phil.* 61) or Grube (*P.'s Th.* 269). Aristotle criticized it as a seriously meant proposal (*Pol.* 1262b24), and P. himself includes it in the very brief summary with which he begins the *Tim.* See further pp. 481f. below.

meant; which, at least in the sense that his purpose was to shed further light on human nature and moral principles, and he had no intention of bringing his imagined state into existence, I (like Hoerber) believe to be true.

To support the thesis that later on Plato actually rescinds the requirement, the following passages have been cited:<sup>1</sup>

4.434a-b. (S. has just said that if workers in different crafts within their own class swap tools and try their hand at each others' jobs, or one man attempts two jobs, the city will come to no great harm.)

But when someone who is by nature (*physei*) a workman or other money-earner gets puffed up by wealth or popular support or physical strength or the like and aspires to the military group,<sup>2</sup> or one of the warriors to the counselling Guardian class, and *these* people share each others' tools and privileges, or when the same man tries to do all these jobs at once, I expect you agree that this changing round and meddling spells ruin to the state.

8.546a-547a. Here Plato describes how decay (inevitable in anything generated) will invade even his imagined city-state. It will be through mistakes in breeding. The Guardians control times and partners for mating (5.458d ff. and pp. 480f. below) and there are certain periods when body and soul are at their best for reproduction. These are calculable, but a time will come when even the wise Guardians make a human error,<sup>3</sup> resulting in less gifted offspring, whose rule and education of their successors will be less careful. In the end a generation will arise who have lost the true Guardian's capacity to judge the citizens' metal aright, and their mixture will produce inferior alloys containing the seeds of dissension and war.

I do not see how the first of these passages could be thought to rescind the provision for transfers. It emphasizes that the classes must be based on differences of natural aptitude (*physis*), which makes it even more important to have some machinery whereby anyone born

<sup>1</sup> Popper (OS 141) and Benson (in Nettleship's *Lectures* 135 n. 1) for 8.546-7; Popper 225 n. 31 for 4.434b.

<sup>2</sup> *Eidos*, not of course in its full Platonic sense of a reality outside particulars; but it *is* a reminder that for Plato being a soldier or Guardian meant possessing a certain stable, definable character. It does not refer to one's parentage. Natural fitness is called for again at 443 c, τὸ τὸν μὲν σκυτοτομικὸν φύσει ὀρθῶς ἔχειν σκυτοτομεῖν.

<sup>3</sup> Being human they must still rely on fallible sense-perception as well as the certainty of reason (5.46b 1-2).

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into one class whose aptitudes fit him for another may be detected and assigned to his proper place. Plato certainly believed in the hereditary transmission of character and intelligence: there will be no intermarriage between classes and mating among the guardians themselves will be strictly controlled.<sup>1</sup> Even so, there can be no absolute guarantee that a child will always resemble its parents, and in view of the dire consequences to the community of unsuitable classing, provision for transfers is absolutely essential. The metals distinguish character, not parentage. Though Plato's plans for human breeding may be repellent, grading according to natural ability is not the same thing as closed hereditary caste. If there would be no unstreamed comprehensive education in his state, neither would a feeble-minded prince obtain the throne by right of birth.

Nor does the second passage deny transfers. In fact it speaks of the capacity to test and detect (δοκιμάζειν) a citizen's metal as essential to a guardian, whereas if it were settled by birth this would be unnecessary. Normally, as Plato has said, misfits will be rare, and such as occur can be put right by the watchful Guardians. But here the case is different. The only way I can read 546c-d is as meaning that a whole marriage-festival has been wrongly timed,<sup>2</sup> and the result is a confusion beyond even the rulers' powers of redress.

Finally, the reason for the state's decay is the general law that everything that is not eternal, but has a temporal beginning in this world of change, must some time perish. All that is explained here is the manner of it in this particular case. (Cf. p. 528 with n. 2 below.)

*Life of the guardians.* The three-tier structure of the state is now established, and little more is heard of the lowest tier.<sup>3</sup> The military

<sup>1</sup> That even among the guardians some are superior and others of less worth, was admitted at 459d. The rulers (ἄρχοντες) are a section of the best among the older of them, who rule in turn (7.540b).

<sup>2</sup> Unions are only allowed at stated times when religious festivals are organized for the purpose (459e).

<sup>3</sup> Historically minded readers may like to know that the germ of P.'s functionally tripartite society has been thought to lie in a system originally common to all Indo-European peoples and surviving among the Mycenaeans, thus justifying Popper's claim (*OS* 49) that 'P. is reconstructing a city of the past'. Dumézil ('Jupiter, Mars, Quirinus', *NRF* 1942) saw in all peoples of I.-E. origin the three classes of priest-kings, warriors and farmers, and added: 'Si les plus vieilles traditions des Doriens et des Ioniens gardaient le souvenir d'une division

and policing duties of the others are still to the fore. First they must be armed, then when, led by the rulers, they have come to the site of the city, they must choose for living quarters, called a 'camp' (στρατόπεδον), the best place from which to conduct defence against foreign aggression and control of internal lawlessness.<sup>1</sup> Like sheep-dogs, however, they must be as gentle and forbearing to their flock as they are fierce towards wolves from outside. This will be ensured primarily by their education, but to remove all possible temptation the following will be their rule of life: no private property beyond the barest essentials; free access between houses; rations (suitable for men under military training) provided by the state and eaten in common messes. Alone of the citizens they may not touch gold or silver, whether as ornaments, drinking-vessels or otherwise. Any private property – land, houses or money – would turn them into farmers or businessmen, engender suspicion and dislike between them and their fellow-citizens, and make them think more of internal security than external defence.

At this point Adeimantus objects that the guardians will not be particularly happy. Instead of living like the kings they are, with lands and money, gold and silver, of their own, these rulers sound more like hired mercenaries. 'Without even getting the mercenary's pay', agrees S. unperturbed. He would not be surprised if they were happy nevertheless,<sup>2</sup> but they are not trying to secure the happiness of a particular class, but as far as possible of the whole city, for under such a régime they thought it most likely that they would discover justice – another reminder that the original aim, to which the founding of the city is ancillary, has not been forgotten.<sup>3</sup> So their guardians

fonctionnelle de la société tripartite, la cité idéale de Platon ne serait-elle pas, au sens le plus strict, une réminiscence indo-européenne?' According to Palmer in *Hist. Today* 1957, 371, Mycenaean society was stratified into 'classes of priests and warriors supported by a  *demos*  of producers'. (Nilsson in *Cultes, Mythes* etc. App. I suggested that the Ionian phylae originally represented occupation classes; not however three, but four.) Of all this we may be pretty sure that P.'s conscious mind was innocent.

<sup>1</sup> It is solely on this that Popper bases his description of the establishment of the state as 'the subjugation of a sedentary population by a conquering warhorde' (OS 50).

<sup>2</sup> In fact he becomes convinced that they will. See 5.465 d–466 b.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. p. 434 and n. 2 above. The last few points, especially the reminder of 375 cff. (need to combine gentleness with fierceness), do something to mitigate the impression of P.'s intentions produced by Popper in note 1.

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must not be idle voluptuaries, but true guardians, and the last men to harm the community.

*Third class: the state and war.* The third class includes all – workmen, farmers, owners of businesses, bankers and so on – who are allowed private property, but here too the Guardians must prevent extremes of wealth and poverty, of which ‘the first produces luxury and idleness, the second meanness and bad work, and both have a revolutionary tendency’ (422a). Adeimantus interposes again. With so little wealth in the state, how can it stand up to a rich and powerful enemy? Well, for one thing tough professional soldiers can take on many times their number of wealthy, ease-loving men. Secondly, if two cities attack us, and we say to one: ‘If you join forces with us, you can have all the spoils, for we are not allowed to possess gold and silver’, we shall soon have it on our side. But is it not dangerous to allow one state to amass the wealth of all the others? No, for it will no longer be one state but at least two: the rich and the poor will be at each others’ throats within it.<sup>1</sup> Our own Guardians must ensure that the city never grows too large to remain a unity.

*Unity of the state.*<sup>2</sup> Plato’s scorn for the idea of the ‘Two Nations’ seems to many startlingly at variance with his own thesis that the only way to engender the spirit of harmony and unity was to divide the state rigidly into three classes. But these classes are based neither on wealth nor birth, but on his conviction (soon to be elaborated) that individual men fall naturally into three basic psychological types, to which the classes correspond. ‘The same qualities (or kinds, *eidē*) must exist in the state as in each single one of us. Where else could they have come from?’ (435e). And each type finds satisfaction in the occupation best suited to it, one in commerce or good craftsmanship and material goods, another in army life.<sup>3</sup> If any have cause for

<sup>1</sup> This theme recurs in the description of the oligarchic state, p. 530 below.

<sup>2</sup> P. enlarges on this in bk 5, 462a ff. (p. 481 below).

<sup>3</sup> This has never been put so well as by Cornford in *U. Phil.* 61 f., for instance (p. 62): ‘Now if it be true that men can be roughly grouped according to these temperamental varieties of dominant motive, and if society can avail itself of this natural fact, then there is a possibility of these divergent types pursuing each its own satisfaction, side by side, without competition and conflict. This is the key to Plato’s solution of the social problem.’

## *Guardians and auxiliaries*

dissatisfaction it is the Guardians, who must periodically leave the delights of philosophy for the chores of government, and Plato has to defend himself against the charge of doing them an injustice (7.519d-521b), since 'those who hold power must not be in love with it'. However, with the clear vision of men who have first been carefully selected through a series of rigorous tests and then educated to comprehend the supreme moral Forms, they will see and accept the necessity.

These are not so much the machinations of a totalitarian monster as the dreams of an impractical theorist. Could anyone hope to create a state in which simple avarice in the big business man will always so predominate<sup>1</sup> over any instinct for power that he will be content to go on making money without using it to further any higher ambitions (especially when its amount is strictly limited by law)? Plato is confident that this will be true of the great majority, and any exceptions must simply be slapped down (434a-b). True, no lover of wealth and ease would covet the Guardians' 'monastic austerity' (Cornford's phrase), but this might not prevent a rebellion against the whole system. The army, directed by the rulers, would doubtless win, but Plato's ideal is a genuine spirit of concord and cooperation. His dream of a complete divorce of political from economic power arose from his own experience of the evil effects of cupidity on politicians at Athens, and it is certainly a nobler ideal than Callicles's.<sup>2</sup> Yet it may be that, as Lewis Mumford has written (*City in Hist.* 186), 'By keeping the majority of the inhabitants outside politics, the area of full citizenship, [Plato's] polis gave them a licence to be irresponsible. What was equally bad, it gave them no other occupation than self-promoting economic activity, and relieved them of any moral end or obligation even of those affairs they could govern.' The most

<sup>1</sup> Every soul contains all three elements, as every city contains three classes, and a man's character is determined by that which prevails.

<sup>2</sup> Since writing the above I learn that Plato's rule is enforced in Julius Nyerere's Tanzania. There, according to Teresa Hayter (*Hayter of the Bourgeoisie* (1972), 68), 'Politicians and others in positions defined as responsible are not permitted to own any profitable enterprises or any goods which are not for their own personal use. . . But there has not been any attack on the wealth and privileges of others; those who want to retain them do so, on condition that they do not wish to be politicians or to hold certain public positions.'

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persuasive defence of Plato is undoubtedly Cornford's in *Plato's Commonwealth*, where he writes (*U. Phil.* 58):

The principle that guided him was this. A social order cannot be stable and harmonious unless it reflects the unalterable constitution of human nature. More precisely, it must provide a frame within which the normal desires of any human being can find legitimate scope and satisfaction. A social system which starves or thwarts any important group of normal human desires will, sooner or later, be overthrown by the forces it has repressed, and, while it lasts, will warp and pervert them.

Unfortunately it is possible to think of a number of normal human desires which the Guardians will have to repress. But the truth is that Plato is not devising a society with a view to its ever coming into being. He is telling us what it would be like *if* philosophers came to power, not because he seriously believes that they will, but in order to reveal his conception of human nature at its best, or in his phraseology, 'justice in the individual'.<sup>1</sup>

So he tells us that there must be no extremes of wealth and poverty in the city, but gives no hint of how this admirable end is to be attained,<sup>2</sup> and goes on to say that the Guardians must keep the population down to the size at which a city can preserve its unity, again with no mention of means or even any guide to determining what sort of size this may be.<sup>3</sup> Glaucon makes a joke of this, remarking ironically that the Guardians are being given a nice easy task, but S. replies that it all comes down to education. With the advantage of the system proposed, each generation will be better than the last, and they themselves, as founders, can confidently leave such legislation to the Guardians, as well as many other matters, from commercial, criminal and civil law, market and customs regulations (425 c-d), to social behaviour and decorum, and above all the paramount duty of allowing no innovations whatsoever in the charter of foundation –

<sup>1</sup> That this is the view taken here has been indicated under 'Subject' (p. 434 with n. 2 above). The evidence is cumulative, and will be more fully considered later (pp. 483-6 below).

<sup>2</sup> Evidently not by taxation, which would keep down individual wealth but not that of the community for such purposes as war. Cf. 422 a.

<sup>3</sup> The statement at 423 a that a well-run city will surpass others 'even if it has only a thousand men to defend it', sometimes quoted in this connexion, is obviously not an answer. The 'means' suggested by the marriage-festivals (460 a, p. 481 below) are hardly more specific.

## Discovery of justice

all on the principle that 'Good men need no instructions: they will easily discover most of the necessary legislation.'<sup>1</sup>

The section ends with an onslaught, in the *Gorgias* manner, on cities which uphold the present corrupt order of society at all costs, raising to power anyone who panders to their desires, and the irresponsibility of the politicians who humour them; and finally a brief mention of religious laws and institutions, all of which will be referred to Delphi.<sup>2</sup>

### (5) DISCOVERY OF JUSTICE: STRUCTURE OF INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER (4.427D-445B)

*Justice in the city.* Having founded the city, S. returns methodically to his prime objective of discovering where in it lurk justice and injustice, and which will bring happiness to the one who exemplifies it, setting aside all question of rewards or punishment. He proceeds by elimination, on the assumption that the city as they have planned it, being completely good, must contain all the virtues, enumerated by S. as wisdom, courage, *sophrosynē* and justice. If therefore they can identify the first three, what remains will be justice. This unexpected procedure is dismissed by Cross and Woollsey (104f.) as 'worthless', mainly on the ground that Plato has not shown the four forms of excellence to be the only four, which robs the argument of all validity. He may, of course, have been repeating a generally accepted classification or one with which he himself had familiarized his associates, but there is an argument *ex silentio* against this.<sup>3</sup> Anyway it gives S. a chance of telling us where the others too are to be found.

If it is a wise (*sophē*) city, guided by good judgement, it must have

<sup>1</sup> 425d-e. The legislative duties of the Guardians are surely to be wider than Cross and Woollsey allow (pp. 101f.). Notice, by the way, a later *obiter dictum* of P.'s, that the Guardians must have the same conception (*λόγος*) of the polity as 'Glaucón', the original legislator, had when he devised it (497c-d).

<sup>2</sup> In spite of the importance of these in a Greek state, P. was not here shirking his (or the Guardians') responsibilities, for this was normal practice, and he was quite correct in describing Apollo as the *πάτριος ἐξηγητής* (427c; cf. Guthrie, *G. and G.* 186f.).

<sup>3</sup> For the evidence see Adam 1, 224. The strongest candidate for a fifth place would seem to be *δσιότης* (*Prot.* 329c, 330b, cff.), but at *Euthyphro* 12a it is a subdivision of *δικαιοσύνη* and at *Laches* 199d the two are rather ostentatiously bracketed together (not ἡ...ἡ but τε καί).



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knowledge, not any technical or specialized knowledge like the skill of carpentry, ironwork or agriculture,<sup>1</sup> but knowledge 'whereby it can take thought not for some particular interest but to ensure for the state as a whole the best possible relations both internally and with other states' (428c-d). The contrast between special skills and the knowledge of the philosopher (which for Plato is also the art of government, that 'most difficult and greatest art'<sup>2</sup>) is a familiar development of the Socratic 'virtue is knowledge'. The *Republic* will answer the question of the *Charmides* (173d ff., p. 162 above): To live well we need knowledge – but *what* knowledge? There the answer eluded them, as (I believe) it eluded Socrates.<sup>3</sup> It is knowledge not of means but of ends, for Plato a grasp of the Forms and ultimately of the supreme 'Form of the Good' which only the philosopher can approach. In our imagined state it is obviously confined to the smallest class (428e), the Guardians. Equally obviously its corporate courage resides in its fighting men, *not* because they alone possess it, but because the courage or cowardice of the others is not decisive for the character of the state as a whole (429b). This is a timely reminder that *every man possesses in some measure all the psychological characteristics*: the only question is which is dominant. We also notice that courage is given the wide coverage which it had in the 'masked conclusion' of the *Laches*. It is 'the power to retain in all circumstances a right and lawful judgement about what is and what is not to be feared'.<sup>4</sup> The *sophrosynē*<sup>5</sup> or self-mastery of the state is not confined to one part, but consists in a harmony of will between all classes as to which is to be in control. This will prevail in our city because the divisions correspond to psychological reality, the subject class consisting solely of those who do not *want* to rule, but simply to engage in a trade or

<sup>1</sup> The original and still current meaning of σοφία (vol. III, 27).

<sup>2</sup> *Pol.* 292 d, where P. repeats the point that only a small minority can attain it.

<sup>3</sup> See especially vol. III, 464-6.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 129, 132 f. above. The distinction between ὁρῆ δόξα and ἐπιστήμη is not being stressed here, but the army will of course be instructed by the Guardians. That is why S. speaks of πολιτικὴ ἀνδρεία, and says they may go into this some other time, when they are not looking for justice (430c). In its strictest sense, courage must be based on knowledge, which only the Guardians can have.

<sup>5</sup> For the meaning of the word see pp. 156 f. above. Here (430e) S. explains it as mastery of one's better self over one's worse.

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profession, make money and enjoy themselves.<sup>1</sup> On the practicability of this I have already commented.

As for justice itself, it suddenly dawns on S. that it has been under their noses the whole time, in the original principle that each should do his own work and not another's,<sup>2</sup> 'each performing the one function in the community for which he is by nature best suited' (433a). This seems to make it very like *sophrosynē*, but in fact it has a more exalted station. This last virtue is 'that which gives all the others the power (*dynamis*) to spring up in the community and by their presence preserve it'. 'Justice' is the very essence and source of virtue itself.<sup>3</sup> Nettleship draws attention to the fact that for Plato the virtues are *dynameis*, 'powers to do something', thereby conforming to the Greek *aretē*, so pitifully translated by our 'virtue'; 'a man of great virtue in Greek means a man with a great power of doing certain things'.<sup>4</sup> This principle then, it seems, is the supreme safeguard of the city, and its contrary, interference by the members of one natural class in the work of another, constitutes injustice.

*Justice in the individual* (435d-444a). So far so good, but the state was only constructed, and justice sought there, because 'we thought that if we tried to see it first in something larger, we should more easily perceive its nature in the individual man'.<sup>5</sup> The next step therefore is to transfer our findings to the individual and see if they

<sup>1</sup> Cross and Woosley (107) note with some concern that their agreement 'seems to imply the attribution to the subjects... of some degree of rationality'. Of course. Like the others, τὸ λογιστικόν is a universal human characteristic. Cf. p. 474 n. 3 below. As for 'understanding of how the city should be run', this need amount to no more than a shrewd idea which side their bread is buttered. C. and W. speak differently on pp. 123f.

<sup>2</sup> 433a-b. P. in fact adds, and repeats, a qualification: this behaviour 'or one kind of it' (τοῦτου τι εἶδος) is justice, and 'if it happens in a certain way' (τρόπον τινὰ γιγνόμενον). It is difficult to see what he could have had in mind except what Murphy suggested (*Interpr.* 10-12), that doing one's work is justice *if* it is not arbitrarily imposed but is that for which each is 'by nature best suited'. This weakens the doubtful claim of Cross and Woosley (p. 110) that P. has shifted from 'sticking to one's own job' to 'sticking to one's own class', confusing 'the economic principle of division of labour and the political principle of the division of classes'. For Plato the classes consist of individuals doing the work for which they are fitted.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 435 above and cf. 444d13, where ἀρετή is suddenly substituted for δικαιοσύνη. So Nettleship (151f.): Though spoken of as a separate virtue, justice 'is really the condition of existence of all the virtues; each of them is a particular manifestation of the spirit of justice, which takes different forms according to a man's function in the community'.

<sup>4</sup> *Lectt.* 149. For courage as a δύναμις see 429b, 430b.

<sup>5</sup> 434d; cf. bk 2, 368e-369a.

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fit, with a warning that the present methods will lead only to an interim, approximate answer: a final one would need 'a longer way round'. In book 6 (504b) S. returns to this proviso, and explains that the 'longer route' is that towards the Form of Goodness itself, something even higher than justice, which is followed in detail in books 6 and 7.<sup>1</sup> The present inquiry starts from the Socratic principle, so vulnerable in logic, so essential to S.'s belief in stable moral values, that if we give two things, different in other respects, the same epithet, then that epithet stands for something identical in both.<sup>2</sup>

It is first said that individuals *must* exhibit the same characteristics as the state, because a state is nothing but the men who compose it. This would seem to settle the question in advance, but the point to be decided (says S.) is whether the three main forms of psychological activity – intellectual, 'spirited' and appetitive – can be exercised by a single unitary *psyche*, or each presupposes a distinct faculty or element. This is resolved by appeal to a principle of non-contradiction, stated thus: A thing cannot at the same time act or be acted on in opposite ways in the same part of it with relation to the same object. Now thirst in itself is simply an appetite for drink as such, yet there are circumstances where the same man is thirsty but unwilling to drink. Since we cannot attribute both the desire and the restraint to the same psychological source, there must be at least two elements in the soul, appetite controlled by reason.<sup>3</sup> Again, reason by itself is not always enough to secure resistance to an appetite which it may tell us is wrong or harmful. If we yield to it we feel anger or remorse, suggesting a third element, the spirited or passionate, which normally fights as reason's auxiliary, but is not identical with it; bad upbringing may corrupt it into taking the side of appetite.

<sup>1</sup> See on this Cross and Woosley 112–15. Some of what they say on p. 114 is questionable. τοῦτο at 435d cannot possibly in its context refer to anything but the question of three elements in the soul, and the contrast between bk 4 and bks 5–6 is not between 'being more intelligent and of sound judgement' and possessing *knowledge*. Knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) is the keyword of both passages, and the nature of φυλακτικὴ ἐπιστήμη (428d) is nowhere specified in the earlier one. C. and W. rightly characterize the two methods as respectively psychological or empirical and philosophical, but some difficulties remain. See Adam, I, 244f.; Murphy, *Interpr.* 9f.

<sup>2</sup> 435b. Cf. p. 444 with n. 2 above and vol. III, 431f.

<sup>3</sup> Reason as a universal human characteristic is here called λόγος and τὸ λογιστικόν. In *Phdr.* similarly it is λογισμός, and consists in the power to form general concepts from sense-experience (249b, p. 427 above).

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Given that the soul has these three elements, S. feels justified in concluding that the virtues of the individual citizen (ἰδιώτης) are the same as those of the state as a whole. His wisdom resides in his reasoning faculty, which, like the Guardians in the city, takes thought for the well-being of the whole man, and his courage (physical and moral), of course, in the spirited element, whose proper part is to obey and assist the reason. Their alliance will be ensured by education. His *sophrosynē* consists in willing agreement that reason should be in control and keep the appetites within the bounds beyond which they are no longer doing their proper work and spoil a man's whole life. A character so ordered by nature and training will be just and will manifest itself outwardly in the sort of life commonly called just or moral, for it is unthinkable that such a man should embezzle money, betray friends or city, commit theft, sacrilege, perjury, adultery and so on.<sup>1</sup> Justice itself, however, is not a mode of action but an inner state. It is now said to be, not *identical with* the principle of division of labour but *analogous to* it (τοιούτων τι, 443c), and the principle itself is an *image or reflection* (εἰδωλον) of justice. As health results from a harmonious relation between the various constituents of the body, the right ones being in control, so a right relationship between our psychological elements is the condition of justice. The quest is ended, and a final answer given to Polemarchus, Thrasymachus and his brother-sophists alike. All, from Protagoras to Callicles, looked for justice in outward behaviour alone, and their suggestions, if not simply wrong, were bound to be incomplete. Moreover, given that virtue is a kind of psychological health or sanity, and vice a disease, deformity or weakness (444c), the further question of which pays better fades into irrelevance, for no one (says Glaucon) would willingly sacrifice health for some external end like wealth or power.<sup>2</sup>

The essential mark, and internal motive force, of soul is *eros*, the stream of desire which may be directed into different channels (p. 425

<sup>1</sup> 442d–443b. Some have seen a problem in connecting P.'s conception of justice as a condition of the soul and the ordinary conception of it as abstention from wicked action. Articles have been even written gravely discussing the 'problem' without reference to this passage. Evidently it was no problem for P., nor, in the light of the *Rep.* as a whole, is there any reason why it should have been.

<sup>2</sup> On the ubiquitous Socratic (and Sophistic) analogy between morality and health see also p. 164 above.

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above). Consequently reason itself is a form of love (as its more usual name, 'the *philosophic* element', suggests), described in book 2 as that in man 'which makes him fond of what he understands, and again makes him want to understand what he is attracted to'.<sup>1</sup> The spirited (*θυμοειδές*) element covers three things, (a) fighting spirit, (b) what makes a man indignant at injustice and a coward when he feels himself in the wrong, (c) ambition and competitiveness.<sup>2</sup> For appetite Plato uses the term (*epithymia*) which he sometimes applies to desire in general. Thus in book 9 he attributes a separate *epithymia* to each psychological impulse, while confirming that it applies especially to the lowest 'owing to the intensity of the desires for food, drink, sex and the like, and for money which is the chief means of satisfying them' (580e). So as Nettleship says (158), 'the real conflict is not between reason as such and desire as such, but between different kinds of desires'.

*In what sense is the soul tripartite?*<sup>3</sup> This subject is of some importance as bearing on Plato's belief in immortality. In the three psychological elements, as I have said (p. 422 above), it is not hard to recognize the charioteer and horses of the *Phaedrus*, and I have argued that these did not represent any division within the soul itself, which as in the *Phaedo* was immortal and akin to the divine, but resulted from its association with earthly existence and the wheel of birth (pp. 422-5). This rested largely on the conception of the soul as motivated wholly by *eros*, a single stream of desire capable of being channelled in three main directions, only one of which is conceivable of it in its purity. In the *Republic* itself (bk 10, pp. 556f. below), Plato repeats that in its pure state the soul is not at all as we see it now, cumbered with the body and other evils. Such an imperfect compound could hardly,

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship 157. This description of the parts follows N. closely. We remember that in *Phdr.* the driver of the horses himself feels the desire for the beloved (pp. 405, 425 above).

<sup>2</sup> Cross and Woosley 123 have a good account of it, incidentally replying to the view that P. only put in a third element to balance the three classes in the state.

<sup>3</sup> For what most scholars call 'parts' of the soul, Plato most commonly uses either the article with relative clause (*τὸ ὃ λογίζεται*, 439d) or an adjective ('the spirited') or the nouns *γένη* and *εἶδη*, kinds or varieties. *μέρος*, usually meaning 'part', is used at 442b-c, but *γένος* is the only noun in the full summing-up of the doctrine at 443c-e. Cornford's article 'The Division of the Soul' in *Hibbert J.* 1930 is enlightening on this point.

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he says, be immortal, and only when we see it by itself shall we know whether it is composite or simple. This would seem to settle the matter, and scholars can only retain the conception of a soul tripartite in its own essence by claiming an 'irresolvable contradiction' between book 4 and book 10 (Cross and Woozley 120). This is not my impression of how Plato composed the *Republic*. Cross and Woozley quote bk 7, 518e, where it is said that the virtues other than reason are not far removed from the body, and even wisdom may be adversely affected by the soul's temporary conjunction with it, as evidence that Plato saw the difficulty without recognizing its extent. But they quote the text only in part. Of the other virtues Plato also says that 'they were *not there before*, but are implanted by habits and practice', and of wisdom that it is a quality of *something more divine*. He could hardly have stated more clearly that it is only association with the body that calls for the virtues connected with the lower parts of the soul.

For Cross and Woozley, 'Plato's psychological talk is metaphorical' (p. 128), as, they add, psychological talk nearly always is. Similarly Patterson, though he concludes correctly that the 'tripartite division ... concerns only the functions of the embodied soul; whereas, in itself, the soul is simple', calls it for that reason 'figurative' (*P. on I.* 88). This might give a wrong impression. Here Nettleship had the answer. When Plato asks whether we seek knowledge, feel anger, and have physical desires with each of three faculties respectively, or the whole soul is involved every time, the question is important to him because of the close connexion in his mind between individual and society. For him

the character of a nation or a state is the character of individual men in it ... If it turned out that the whole soul was equally involved in each of these various activities (each of which is specially characteristic of the functions of one social class), the question would arise whether any one soul could not equally well be employed upon any one of these social functions, and whether any one man could not equally well be a governor or a soldier or a trader. The whole structure of society, as Plato conceives it, is based upon the fact that the activities in question are activities of different 'parts' of the soul, and that though each of these parts is present

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in a degree in every man, the different parts are very differently developed in different men.<sup>1</sup>

If to put 'parts' between quotation-marks seems question-begging, the conception of the soul as moved by *eros*, if not *eros* itself, a single motive force which by association with the body is diverted into three main channels, may come to our aid. By itself it is of course a unity, a divine passion for wisdom alone (bk 10, 611b-e), and on earth it may achieve earthly unity by bringing the three drives into harmony or concord, just as the state achieves its unity: '...that each individual by doing one work, his own, may become not many but one, and thus the whole city may grow to be one' (423d). Taking the *Phaedrus* also into account, it should now be plain that when Plato wrote book 10 he had not forgotten what he said in book 4. The one change came after the *Phaedo*, where passion and appetite were attributed to the body, not the embodied soul.<sup>2</sup> Essentially the soul remains what it was there, simple and akin to the divine.

*Note on moral responsibility.* Cross and Woosley (128-30) raise an interesting point on the doctrine of the tripartite soul in its relation to moral responsibility. 'If a man's soul or self is composed of these three elements, how can he be anything over and above them? And if he is not, how can he be held responsible, let alone morally responsible, for his actions?' The question, they say, is unlikely to have been in Plato's mind, because 'the idea of personal responsibility was hardly, if at all, current in Greek thought'. I suggest that, as Socrates maintained (see vol. III, 469f.), the self is the reason, often referred to by Socrates himself, and Plato after him, simply as the *psyche*. The philosophic part of the living man, the only immortal part (as I have just argued), is, when within the cycle of incarnation, distracted by feelings and desires implanted in it by the needs and importunities of the body (and actually ascribed to the body rather than the soul in the simpler doctrine of the *Phaedo*). In general the rational man *is* responsible

<sup>1</sup> *Lectt.* 154f. For the character of a state as nothing but that of the individuals within it, see 435e and 8.544d.

<sup>2</sup> Pp. 346f. above. For the reason of the change, 421f.

## *Women and children in the Platonic state: warfare*

for controlling these,<sup>1</sup> just as most people would say nowadays that we have the power of resisting temptations; but if he lets them get the upper hand, he may develop a pathological condition (for Plato's analogy with bodily health see p. 475) in which resistance is no longer in his power. Aristotle was severe on such people, arguing that by voluntarily accepting a certain mode of life they were responsible for their present state (*EN* 1114a3-7), but Plato might have had more sympathy with the modern conception of 'diminished responsibility'. The unjust man is tyrannized over by his passions. He is mad, deranged (μαινόμενος, ὑποκεκινηκώς 573c). We have seen also the large part played by circumstances, parental and other, in the formation of all the lower types of character, and the psychosomatic and external origins ascribed to vices in the *Timaeus* (86b-87b) are striking.

### (6) WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE PLATONIC STATE (WITH APPENDIX ON THE CONDUCT OF WARFARE) (4.445B-5.471C)

Having settled with justice, S. was about to complete the original plan by turning to the question of injustice in state and individual, and had got as far as naming four inferior types of constitution for investigation, when his friends pulled him up short.<sup>2</sup> Among legislation that could be left to the Guardians, he had airily mentioned 'women, marriage and the production of children' as matters which they would settle on the proverbial principle 'all things in common between friends' (423e). If he thinks he can get away with that, he is mistaken. What did he mean, and how is this vital aspect of society to be organized? He protests vigorously that such a vast and difficult subject will lead to endless discussion, and anyway he is by no means

<sup>1</sup> Cf. S.'s explanation of 'being one's own master' at 430e-431a, and the description of the philosopher-king as βασιλεύων αὐτοῦ at 9.580c. Andersson points out that *psyche* and 'self' (αὐτός) are often used interchangeably (*Polis and Psyche* 92f.), though without explicitly noting that this implies a separation of one element of the (incarnate) *psyche* from the rest.

<sup>2</sup> This section is therefore sometimes said (even by P. himself, 8.543c) to have been a digression, but is no more so than the establishment of the state itself, to which it is a return. On the question whether bks 5-7 are a later insertion see reff. in Andersson's footnotes to *Polis and Psyche* 123. That this should be true of 6 and 7 at least seems incredible.



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certain about it. His plan may not be feasible, or if feasible, desirable. But the others are adamant: he is not to be let off.

This insistence on returning to discuss the why and how of a radical social reform perhaps suggests that Plato did think of his state as within the realm of practical politics; but if so, he might have done better to leave it in the air like other proposals. The principle of equality of the sexes is evidently meant seriously, which is startling enough for a Greek,<sup>1</sup> but the arrangements proposed (except perhaps for mixed physical exercises) are wildly impossible.

The first is that women should share the duties, and therefore the education, of men. A simple syllogism suggests that this contravenes his pet principle: Different natures suit different jobs, men and women have different natures, therefore men and women should have different jobs. This is one of the difficulties that made him fight shy of the subject, but he gets over it by a sudden passion for precision which has not always been conspicuous hitherto. The question is, he argues, do they differ *in the relevant aspect*,<sup>2</sup> as doctor from builder, not as long-haired from bald? That one sex bears and the other begets is irrelevant, and though women are weaker, there is no natural difference with respect to social and political competence. Women, like men, may or may not be good at medicine or music, may be athletic, spirited or philosophic, and some will be fit to be guardians, just as some men are. These can share all a guardian's duties, including fighting, though theirs must be lighter than the men's. The proposal is desirable as well as possible because, as a guardian's education produces the best men, so it will give us the best women.

Next S. proposes abolition of families in the guardian class,<sup>3</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> That is, alien to Greek practice and conventional belief, though perhaps neither this nor the idea of communal sex was foreign to the leaders of the 'Enlightenment' and their successors. See Adam, 1, 354f. Aristophanes in his *Ecclesiazusae* ridiculed communism in both property and women, in terms very like those of P. Adam lists parallels on pp. 350f., and for theories of the relationship between *Ecc.* and *Rep.* see his app. 1 as a whole and Hoerber, *Theme* 117. Interestingly enough, P. the advocate of equality speaks twice of the 'possession' of women (κτῆσις 423e and 451c). Even softening the translation to 'acquisition of wives' hardly suits the system he proposes. Old habits die hard. (This apart from the loose zeugma of 423e, as if *περί* had preceded γάμων καὶ παιδοποιίας.) In bk 8 (563b) freedom and equality for women are a mark of the excessive licence of the democratic state.

<sup>2</sup> The logical distinction between ἀπλῶς (in P. πάντως, 454c) and κατὰ (or πρὸς) τι became a favourite with Aristotle, who however did not agree with P.'s application of it here to men and women. See *EN* 1162a22 and 26.

<sup>3</sup> 'All these women will be shared by all the men, and none shall privately set up house together' (457c-d).

## *Women and children in the Platonic state: warfare*

provision that parents and children should remain unknown to each other. How is it to be done? In spite of living and working together (which includes exercising naked), sexual intercourse among guardians will be strictly controlled, to ensure that breeding is only from the best. (Plato uses throughout the analogy of animal breeding, his examples being horses, dogs and birds, and refers to the guardians as a 'herd' at 459e.) Mating is allowed only at fixed religious festivals, in numbers calculated to maintain a constant population. Partners will be chosen by lot, which however will be cleverly manipulated by the rulers (administering a big dose of that useful medicine, deceit) so that inferior guardians will have fewer opportunities. Babies of best stock will be taken to state nurseries adequately staffed, the mothers visiting them for breast-feeding only, none knowing her own child. Those of inferior stock will not be 'kept'. Participation in a marriage-festival when below or above a prescribed age will be a crime, but the older people will be allowed to mate freely, avoiding conception if possible, and if it occurs, getting rid of the foetus or infant. Parents of each 'generation' (those born within ten lunar months of their festival) will regard all in it as their children, and be addressed by them as father and mother. The aim of all this is to foster the spirit of unity in the state, on which S. now enlarges. The wealth-producing class will not call the rulers rulers, but guardians and protectors, and they in their turn will look on the others not as subjects but as the paymasters responsible for their maintenance. Within the guardian class everyone will regard everyone else as a relation – brother, sister, father, mother or grandparent.<sup>1</sup> It is (as S. points out) the logical conclusion of the absence of private property and housing. With the family disappears the last temptation to selfishness, greed and dissension, and a major source of worry and anxiety.

### ADDITIONAL NOTE: TREATMENT OF UNWANTED CHILDREN

The question whether Plato advocates infanticide or only relegation to an inferior class has aroused interest and different opinions. The relevant passages in this section may be translated thus:

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle's commonsense criticism of this 'watery' (ὕδαρής) affection at *Pol.* 1262b15 is well known.

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459 d 'The offspring of some must be reared (τρέφειν), of others not.'

460 c 'The offspring of inferior parents, and any of the others that is defective,<sup>1</sup> will be put away in a secret and obscure place.'

461 c (of conception among over-age couples) 'They must do their best to ensure that the embryo does not see the light, or if it does, deal with it on the understanding that there is no rearing (τροφή) of such.'

The arrangements for relegation already discussed (pp. 464–6) certainly seem designed for such cases, especially the order at 415 c that inferior children of guardians must be 'dismissed to the craftsmen and farmers'. τρέφειν and τροφή, Cornford claims (*Rep.* 155 n. 2), do not in horse-breeding (Plato's own analogy) signify rearing as opposed to killing, but only keeping in the select herd. The 'secret place' in 460 c is indeed obscure, and in Adam's view a euphemism. A strong point on Cornford's side is that in the *Timaeus* (19a), where he summarizes some of the *Republic's* conclusions, Plato himself writes, 'We said that the children of good parents must be reared, but those of the bad must be secretly distributed among the rest of the citizens.' Yet Adam (*Rep.* 357–60) remained convinced that to Plato's contemporaries at least he would appear to intend infanticide. They would not have been shocked, for it was practised in Greece, and perhaps as Lee suggests (*Rep.* 244–6) he intended both methods to be used as appropriate. Aristotle enjoins exposure for *deformed* children, but for mere family limitation regards abortion 'before sensation and life begin' as the only permissible means (*Pol.* 1335 b 19).<sup>2</sup>

*Conduct of warfare* (466e–471c). The need for women to join in military service leads naturally to a wider discussion of this topic. Children will be taken to the battlefield as soon as they are strong enough, to learn as any other trade is learned from watching their seniors practising it, appropriate measures being taken for their safety. Cowards will be expelled from the guardians, the brave rewarded (among other things by kisses) and the dead revered. No corpses should be robbed except of arms. Hostilities between Greek states are family quarrels in comparison with wars against the non-Greek (the Greek's 'natural enemy' 470c) and the hope will always be for

<sup>1</sup> ἀνάπηρον; 'handicapped' as they might be called today.

<sup>2</sup> For evidence concerning exposure of children in Greece see H. D. Rankin, *P. and Indiv.* 47f. with nn., and on the *Rep.* and *Tim.* passages *idem*, 'P.'s Eugenic εὐφημία and ἀπόθεσις', *Hermes* 1965.

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reconciliation. Therefore Greeks must not be enslaved,<sup>1</sup> nor their territory ravaged and houses burned, though crops may be taken. We may recall Plato's other pronouncements on war, that its origin is in the greed of luxurious cities (including his own) for more territory, and that the guardians will take no spoils.<sup>2</sup>

### (7) IS THE PLATONIC CITY INTENDED AS A PRACTICAL POSSIBILITY? (5.471C-473B)

At this point (471c) Glaucon refuses to go on until S. has faced the question, hitherto evaded, whether this state, granted its virtues *if* it existed, could ever become a reality, and if so how. It is a good moment to ask ourselves seriously the same question.<sup>3</sup> I have already expressed an opinion,<sup>4</sup> but there is more evidence to be considered. S., we have seen, throws out the most radical proposals with the minimum of practical detail about how to achieve them. There remains what he has to say directly on the subject. He first reminds them (472b ff.) that their primary purpose was not to found a state but to define justice. In doing so they were thinking of justice as an absolute or ideal, a standard by which to live, and as such none the worse because in practice we can only approximate to it. So then the state, if it cannot be fully realized in practice, remains to shape our own political

<sup>1</sup> From this passage alone it is obvious that there will be slaves in the Platonic city, and it is strange that this has been a matter of dispute. The slaves will be non-Greeks (as the majority were in existing Greek cities) and, as at Athens, there will also be free citizen labourers working for wages (371e). Reff. for the controversy, and discussion of other passages, are in Vlastos's article 'Does Slavery Exist in P.'s *Rep.*?' (*CP* 1968). There have also written on the other side (in my opinion unconvincingly) S. Pétrement in *R. de Métaph.* 1965 and C. Despotopoulos in *REG* 1970. Cf. also Ritter, *Essence* 329.

<sup>2</sup> 373d-e, 422d (pp. 447, 448 and 468).

<sup>3</sup> On which opinions have differed widely. Here are a few. For an extreme (and amusing) rejection of practicability see Randall, *Plato* 162ff. On the same side are Friedländer (III, 138-40, an interesting and subtle exposition), Nettleship 184f., Jaeger, *Paid.* II, ch. 9, Levinson (*Defense* passim, see e.g. 576), Versényi (*Philos.* 1971, 234: 'an unattainable ideal... unrealizable because the establishment of the aristocratic state presupposes itself'), Hoerber, *Theme*, Saunders, *Laws* 27f. On the other side are Zeller 2.1.914-23 (following Hegel), Popper (*OS*, e.g. 153: 'meant by its author not so much as a theoretical treatise, but as a topical manifesto'), Crossman (*PT*) and Cornford ('He is too much bent upon the reform of Greek society to be ready to postpone it to the millennium', and the rest of his essay in *U. Ph.*). For the Sicilian adventures see below.

<sup>4</sup> Pp. 457 n. 1, 468, 468-70.

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thinking and guide our actions.<sup>1</sup> The reminder of the *Republic* in the *Laws* is in keeping with this. There (739c–e) Plato speaks of a city where wives, children and goods are common and the words ‘my own’ abolished. Complete unity of feeling results, and nothing could be better, ‘whether it exists anywhere now or even will exist’. If gods or their children inhabit such a city they are indeed happy. One need look no further for a pattern for a state, but should hold to this and seek one ‘as like it as lies in one’s power’. The one planned in the *Laws*, he concludes, is such a one, second only to the ideal. It is important to remember what in Plato’s eyes was *real*. To be real an idea does not have to be transformed into a phenomenon of this mutable and imperfect world. The intelligible Forms are real *in contrast to* such phenomena. Plato may not have the Forms in mind at the moment, but he makes his standpoint clear by saying (to us surprisingly) that it is the nature of practice to be further removed from truth (or reality, ἀλήθεια) than theory (λέξις) is (473a).

Some, without committing themselves to the full ‘blue-print’ conception of the *Republic*, conclude, like Field after devoting a chapter to ‘Plato on contemporary politics’, that he meant what he wrote to apply to the problems of his own time. So too von Fritz: whether or not the *Republic* was an unrealizable ideal, it had the practical importance of giving the direction in which attempts at improvement on existing conditions should move. And Barker, after emphasizing the practical aims of the dialogue, ends up: ‘that there should ever be a state according to this manner, Plato hardly expects; it must be an ideal to which men may approximate as closely as they can, but not a copy of what must be imitated line for line’. Much of Field’s and Barker’s evidence consists in showing that Plato in his dialogues *attacks* contemporary trends; but from this negative fact that he is criticizing the evils of his own time it does not follow that his positive ideal was one for immediate (or even ultimate) realization. What these scholars are saying, indeed, is very like what S. himself says here in book 5.<sup>2</sup>

Others have laid stress on the fact that the city was to be a Greek

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the important article of Versényi, ‘P. and his Liberal Opponents’, in *Philos.* 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Field, *P. and Contemps.* 131, von Fritz, *P. in Siz.* 14, Barker *PTPA* 160.

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one, as Plato himself calls it (470e); but how else could he have imagined it? Zeller thought it modelled on Sparta, but though Plato admired many features of the Spartan way of life, he expressly distinguishes its constitution from his own as the first of the inferior types (545a).<sup>1</sup> Nor is it likely that he seriously hoped to achieve the ideals of the *Republic* in Sicily, with Dionysius II as philosopher-king.<sup>2</sup> His motives, fears and hopes in undertaking this disastrous venture into practical politics have already been described (pp. 17, 24–6, 29–30 above).

But S. says more. Let them ask themselves what is the smallest change necessary to convert a city to his ideal. Having explained this condition, he pronounces it (at 6.499b–d) ‘not impossible, though admittedly difficult’, but adds that it could only come about by chance or some divine inspiration, and also (rather pathetically in view of Plato’s subsequent unwilling involvement in practical politics), that if it were *not* possible, ‘we should rightly be laughed at as mere wishful thinkers’.<sup>3</sup> The words ‘difficult but not impossible’ are even repeated at 6.502c and 7.540d. But what is this one smallest change? Only that political power should be in the hands, not of those eager for it, but of philosophers who, though they would dislike it, might (at least one of them) be persuaded to accept it;<sup>4</sup> and the first thing the philosopher-ruler will propose is to take human society and habits and wipe them out, not starting on his own picture till he has made himself a clean canvas (501a). No wonder that when S. puts forward the perfectly logical proposal (granted his premises) that he must start by banishing all citizens over the age of ten, Glaucon replies that this is the way his city would come into existence, *if it*

<sup>1</sup> Thus Popper (*OS* 227) describes P.’s state as ‘a kind of arrested Sparta’, but cf. 8.544c and p. 530 below. For its Greekness, Zeller, 2.1.915, Cornford, *U. Ph.* 61, Cross and Woosley 199. For a full discussion of P.’s ‘paradoxical’ attitude to Sparta, see Tigerstedt, *Legend of S.* 244–76. On p. 266 he speaks of ‘a deliberate polemic motive’ against admirers of Sparta here, and on p. 273 he asserts that ‘the Spartan ideal was never exposed to a heavier attack than in the *Republic* and the *Laws*’.

<sup>2</sup> As among others Crossman, Cornford and Hammond (*Hist.* 517) have believed. Levinson deals at length with Crossman in *Defense*, 369–94. Against the idea one may cite Sinclair, *GPT* 182, Hoerber ch. 8. See also v. Fritz, *P. in Sic.* 14, 115.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Ep.* 7.328c and p. 25 above. To reform existing states according to his ideas would need ‘a combination of vast resources with good luck’ (326a).

<sup>4</sup> See further on this pp. 502, 520 below.

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*ever did*. No wonder that in book 7 (536c), S. checks himself in a tirade against the present neglect of philosophers with a reminder that they are not in earnest,<sup>1</sup> and finally agrees that his city is not to be found on earth but 'perhaps is laid up in the heavens as a pattern for a man to see and, seeing, establish it *in his own self*'.<sup>2</sup> We end as we began. The search is less for a city than for personal righteousness.

In Plato the word 'myth' has many different applications. Myths may be stories told to children, fictional in content but, if good myths, illustrating moral truths, or transparent allegories like the myth of the metals. They may be his own great eschatological myths, which, though he will not vouch for the details, convey his belief that the soul is immortal and is treated after death according to the life it has lived on earth. Again, he applied the word to the whole cosmology, physics and physiology of the *Timaeus*, which he puts forward as the most accurate account possible of the natural world, mythical only in the sense that supersensible reality alone can be the subject of exact knowledge. In yet another way the *Republic* too is a myth.<sup>3</sup> It is not the 'Platonic Idea' of a city, which would be composed of ideal men (and would certainly not go to war; Cornford was right to say that Plato takes human nature as it is and tries to construct a social order that will make the best of it). But it is still a *paradeigma* or model of the order which, given men's need for communal life and their diversity of character, would be 'completely good' for them (427e), and towards which political thinkers should strive.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> παίζομεν. Cf. p. 60 above.

<sup>2</sup> 592b. Literally translated it is 'to found himself' like a city. On this see Jaeger, *Paid.* II, 347-57, 'The State Within Us'.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ἡ πολιτεία ἦν μυθολογοῦμεν λόγῳ, 501e; also bk 2, 376d.

<sup>4</sup> This is sufficient justification for the more prosaic Aristotle's criticism of it in the *Politics* as seriously meant. After calling one of its provisions impracticable he complains that we are nowhere told how to take it (1261a14), and a little later (1264a5) he says it would be clearer if one could see the city in course of construction. But his main criticism is of P.'s aims, especially his conception of unity in a city.

## *Knowledge, belief and the two orders of reality*

### (8) KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF AND THE TWO ORDERS OF REALITY: WHY PHILOSOPHERS MUST RULE (5.473C-6.487A)

In answering Glaucon's question, how his city-state could be realized, S. says he is facing a wave bigger than any he has yet breasted, which may drown him in floods of ridicule. (Glaucon thinks physical violence more likely.) The simple answer is that society must be governed by philosophers. Only then can a state such as his own arise, or humanity<sup>1</sup> have rest from troubles. This calls for a definition of a philosopher, which S. introduces in an unexpected way presumably designed to lead on to the epistemological and ontological distinctions that Plato now wishes to draw. He says (with a facetious reference to Glaucon's supposed amatory propensities) that whoever loves something loves the whole of it, so a *philosopher* (lover of knowledge or wisdom) must be omnivorous, 'a man with an insatiable appetite for learning everything'<sup>2</sup> (475 c). To Glaucon this suggests enthusiasts for theatre, music and the minor arts who rush round the country never missing a festival, but would never dream of entering on a philosophical discussion. Are they the sort that S. has in mind? No, though there is a certain resemblance. This needs explaining.

Glaucon agrees at once to a basic tenet of the doctrine of Forms, that aesthetic and moral qualities, like all Forms, are each in themselves one thing, though associated with many sensible actions and physical objects. His aesthetes and artists enjoy beautiful colours, sounds and shapes, but are unaware of the Forms. Like dreamers, they mistake an appearance for the reality which it resembles. The philosopher on the other hand sees the Form as well as the phenomena that share in it, and does not confuse one with the other. His state of mind S. calls *knowledge*, in contrast to the first, which he will call *belief* (*doxa*).

<sup>1</sup> τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος, which Cross and Woosley (137), following Popper, call an 'ambiguous phrase' which 'could perhaps be extended in this way'. It is not ambiguous, nor is the above translation an extension. When Plato means Greeks he *says* Greeks, as in the passage on warfare which they cite. Here the words bear their plain meaning, as at *Phaedo* 82b.

<sup>2</sup> So Heraclitus (fr. 35 and 40), criticizing Pythagoras, said that '*philosophoi* must be inquirers into very many things', and condemned polymathy as not teaching sense (*nous*). P. plays on earlier current usage of *philosophos* and his own. See vol. 1, 204, and for *sophia* as knowledge p. 265 above.



Others *believe* appearances to be fully real, the philosopher *knows* that this is only true of the Forms.

Now knowledge and belief are different faculties (*dynamais*, lit. 'powers'), and our different faculties – e.g. sight and hearing – have different objects.<sup>1</sup> Knowledge is of what exists, of what does not exist there can only be ignorance.<sup>2</sup> The nature of belief, as just defined, shows that there is another sort of object, 'tossing about somewhere between being and not-being', namely phenomena. After all (re-using an early argument from *H. Maj.* and elsewhere, pp. 179, 183 f. above), anything we call *x* as sharing in a certain quality, relational or otherwise, can also appear not to be *x*. What is beautiful or large becomes in other contexts ugly or small.<sup>3</sup> These intermediates are what the 'lovers of sounds, colours and the like' believe to be real, in contrast to the man who sees and loves 'the unchanging realities themselves', *philosophos* not *philodoxos*.

On the basis of this distinction S. concludes with little further argument that only philosophers should be the Guardians of his state, because only they, in embodying in their constitution notions of right and goodness, have in their minds' eye as models the true nature of these virtues.

This section raises two related problems: (1) Did Plato retain a consistent view of the relation between knowledge and *doxa* and

<sup>1</sup> Empedocles had offered a physical explanation of this, and it had already been used by his follower Gorgias to support his thesis of the impossibility of communication.

<sup>2</sup> We are already involved in the ambiguities of the Greek εἶναι, 'to be'. Here P., though taking it in the full existential sense (his statements that one can neither know nor believe what is not come straight from Parm. 2.7), avoids Parmenides's 'either-or' dilemma by denying that the duality 'existence and non-existence' exhausts the possibilities. In *Soph.* he extricates himself from a rather different puzzle, how false and negative statements or beliefs are possible, by defining μὴ ὄν as not non-existent but 'other than'. He is not ready to do that yet, and Grote (II, 455–7) pointed to a difficulty here in reconciling the two dialogues.

<sup>3</sup> Cross and Woosley (151 ff.) in a long discussion distinguish relational (large, small etc.) from non-relational (beautiful, ugly etc.) properties, and make rather heavy weather of the point that for P. these are not different groups: both sorts are *comparative* properties. Just as a dog is large in comparison with a mouse and small in comparison with an elephant, so a girl is beautiful in comparison with a monkey but ugly in comparison with a goddess. (For a criticism of this use of 'ugly' in P. see Vlastos in Bambrough's *New Essays* 14 f.) As for double and half (479 b), of which they make much, in P.'s mind to call a sensible object beautiful without mentioning the object of comparison is as incomplete as to call it double without saying what it is double. Epithets like 'white', and substantives like 'snow' (not mentioned here by P.), do admittedly cause more difficulty unless one believes in the doctrine of Forms. (Cf. Brentlinger in *AGPh* 1972, 141 f.) See further Scheibe in *Phronesis* 1967.

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their respective objects? (2) Is it right to speak of him as positing different degrees of reality?<sup>1</sup>

(i) *Knowledge, doxa*<sup>2</sup> *and their objects*. In the *Meno* (pp. 256f., 261–4 above) *doxa* appeared to be a dim apprehension of the same objects (Forms and the necessary truths of mathematics) of which knowledge is a clear and complete understanding. Here in the *Republic* each is directed to different objects, knowledge to the Forms and *doxa* to the sensible world alone. It has even been said (by Gulley in *JHS* 1964, 191) that the *Republic* ‘excludes the possibility of converting *doxa* to knowledge proper’. If that were so, one might well wonder how Plato could justify the long and arduous education of book 7, which is designed to turn the chosen few from the military class (which lives by *doxa*, 430b) into philosopher-rulers. There would be no progress along the Line, no way up out of the Cave. But at least the opinion seems now to prevail that on the relationship between *doxa* and knowledge *Meno* and *Republic* are irreconcilable, and exhibit a complete change of mind on Plato’s part.<sup>3</sup>

It should first be noted that the *Symposium*, a dialogue generally thought to be nearer the *Republic* in date, repeats the doctrine of the *Meno* in the *Republic*’s terms of an intermediate state. *Doxa* stands between knowledge and ignorance because it *hits on reality* (τοῦ ὄντος τυγχάνον) but without being able to account for its success, just as

<sup>1</sup> My sections on these questions were written before reading the different approach by Brentlinger, who discusses both in his article ‘Partics. in P.’s Middle Dialogues’ in *AGPh* 1972.

<sup>2</sup> For the retention of this word see p. 262 n. 3 above. Like the section on knowledge and belief in *Meno*, this one was written before seeing Ebert’s *Meinung und Wissen* (1974). See p. 264 n. 1 above.

<sup>3</sup> Bluck (*Meno* 35 ff.) and Cushman in his *Therapeia* are exceptions, but Bambrough says of Bluck that he is ‘dangerously anxious to square what P. says in the *M.* with what he says in the middle and later dialogues in general’, and of Cushman that he ‘sets himself the impossible task of reconciling P.’s various remarks on δόξα and ἐπιστήμη’ (*JHS* 1964, 190, and *CR* 1960, 115). Bambrough’s own view is that ‘the contrast between this passage [on δόξα and ἐπιστήμη in *Rep.*] and the *Meno* is one of the clearest instances of conflict between what P. holds at one time and what he holds at another’ (*Philos.* 1972, 305). I am aware of my rashness in trying to pronounce on a question to which a German scholar devoted a monograph of 130 pages, only to be told by one reviewer that his treatment was ‘cursory’ and lacked precision and detail. (J. Sprute, *Der Begriff des Δόξα i. d. plat. Philos.*, Göttingen 1962. Since then he has written ‘Zum Probl. d. Doxa’ in *AGPh* 1969.) Further reff. are in Ebert, *Mein. und Wiss.* 21 and 22, nn. 74 and 75.

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in *Meno* what made it knowledge was 'working out the reason'. (See pp. 386, 261 above.) The *Republic* view becomes even more uncompromising in the *Timaeus* (27d–28a), where Plato distinguishes what exists (or is real) and never 'becomes', apprehended by thought with a rational account, from what 'becomes and perishes but never is', which is 'judged by *doxa* with unreasoning sensation'. Nevertheless I believe that our *Republic* passage provides a bridge between the two apparently contrasting descriptions, and shows how, although in different dialogues Plato emphasizes one or other feature of his theory of knowledge and being, no real contradiction is involved. His talk here of different faculties is misleading, but soon dropped.<sup>1</sup> The analogy of sight and hearing is faulty, but he himself corrects it to the true one when, later on (484c), he compares the states of mind of the *philodoxos* and *philosophos* with those of the blind and keen-sighted. The only argument offered in favour of knowledge and *doxa* being different faculties is Glaucon's remark that one is infallible and the other fallible, for which the obvious analogy is perfect as opposed to dim sight. If we look ahead to the 'line' of cognition, it is a continuous one, whose parts differ only in degree of clarity or obscurity, and the objects of *doxa* are to those of knowledge as a likeness of something to that which it resembles (509d, 510a), though in that connexion too, as in the *Timaeus*, '*doxa* is about becoming, intellect about being' (534a).

The clue is in the *resemblance*, insisted on again in the dream simile, between the objects of *doxa* and of knowledge. Other ways of putting it are that the sensible world, as he has often said and reminds us here (476d), 'shares in' the nature of the Forms, or as the *Phaedo* has it, sensible things try to be what Forms are but do not quite succeed. Elsewhere they are images or likenesses (εἰδῶλα, εἰκόνες). To add yet another analogy to Plato's, imagine a house on the edge of a lake. One man looks at it through a mist, and gets a rather hazy impression of it. Another looks not at the house at all, but at its reflection in the water on a still, clear day. He is looking at a different object, but he too (even if he were so chained, like Plato's prisoners, that he could

<sup>1</sup> If, as Gosling argues (*Phron.* 1968), δυνάμεις here are not faculties at all, so much the better.

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not see the house but imagined the reflection to be a solid object) is getting an idea of what the real house is like. The successful statesman of the *Meno* seems, in context, to be acting on a dim and uncertain presentiment (*doxa*) of the unchanging Forms of right, wrong and the like, which could be converted into knowledge by 'working out the reason' (pp. 263 f. above). Yet he does not believe in eternal Forms any more than the 'lover of sights and sounds' in the *Republic*, but is aware only of what goes on in the world of becoming. There is no contradiction because the unstable objects of *doxa* (τὰ γιγνόμενα) contain the semblance of the stable realities (ὄντα). Hence in being aware of the sensibles a man is in an unsatisfactory and unsure way – indeed without knowing it – experiencing the first stirrings of an awareness (or as Plato would say a recollection) of the Forms. *Doxa* covers both these experiences, because they are one and the same experience.<sup>1</sup> A man believes or judges (δοξάζει) that in the contingent world, the only one that he recognizes, a certain policy will be right. If his *doxa* is correct, the result on the practical level will be good (beneficial). On the philosophical level he has, unconsciously and by a lucky guess ('divine dispensation' as Plato ironically calls it, *Meno* 99e), referred his action to the standard of the Good, an unchanging Form. Thus, like geometry in the mind of Meno's slave, there may enter his mind in a dreamlike way true, though 'runaway', beliefs about the world of Forms. He has no *knowledge* of them, nor is the life of a politician conducive to constructing, through dialectic, the reasoned account which would convert his *doxa* into knowledge, and himself into the philosophic ruler of the *Republic*.

<sup>1</sup> The point has been made by Cushman in the work criticized by Bambrough (pp. 209 f.): 'Even cognition of particulars, then, in the mode of *doxa*, assisted by "unreasoning sensation", is *de facto* apprehension of the Ideas, though only unwitting and implicit. In order for *doxa* to become *episteme* it is necessary that the Idea implied, and constituting the formal content of *doxa*, be described, that is, be isolated by dialectic and an account or *logos* be rendered. . . *Doxa* is a state of knowing with twofold content: there is the datum of sensation, but accompanying it, and "peering through" as we might say, is the trans-phenomenal Ideal content. Consequently *doxa* is, necessarily, unwitting apprehension of Ideal realities in so far as particulars partake of them, or, conversely, in so far as the Forms are instanced by the particulars.' It is also made, purely in passing, by Hackforth, *CQ* 1942, p. 1: 'When we look at a shadow or a reflection, we are in actual fact not looking at the object which casts the shadow or the reflected object itself; yet to use the contrast of shadow or reflection and real object as a symbol of a Form imperfectly apprehended and perfectly is wholly natural.'

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We must remember that in the *Phaedrus* (a work which most scholars put later than the *Republic*) Plato says that only those souls which have seen the Forms ('the truth') can be born as men.<sup>1</sup> Every man has had the vision of them, and to recollect them is in theory possible for all. Moreover the first step must be through the impact of the likenesses in the sensible world. This is insisted on in *Phaedo*, *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, and in the latter two it is precisely from the appreciation of beauty in earthly creatures that the philosopher recovers the vision of Beauty itself. It is unlikely therefore that Plato denied this in the *Republic*, where again he is contrasting 'the many beautifuls' with 'Beauty itself'. He agrees that, beset by the demands and temptations of life in the body, the great majority 'see many beautiful things, or just actions and so forth, but do not see Beauty or Justice itself'.<sup>2</sup> But this is very different from saying that *doxa* in the *Republic* cannot be converted into knowledge.

Plato can only be understood in his own setting. He is still haunted by the primitive logic of Parmenides, the first to distinguish the two modes of cognition, *doxa* and knowledge or intellect. For him as for Plato knowledge was of 'what is', and inevitably true, but *doxa* was a hopeless confusion of being and not-being, and equally inevitably false.<sup>3</sup> There was no middle way between being and not-being. But for Plato *doxa* may be correct. His way out was to posit a middle stage between knowledge and blank ignorance, and conceive the advance to knowledge as a gradual recovery of truth stored in the subconscious. The object of this intermediate form of cognition is the world of ordinary experience, to which Parmenides had boldly denied any being at all. Plato's belief in Forms enabled him to give it a quasi-existence, 'between being and not-being', as a set of copies of Forms or sharers in their nature, a doctrine none the less firmly held

<sup>1</sup> 249b. I have never seen this passage cited in this connexion, yet it is relevant to statements like Gulley's (*PTK* 66) that P. considers 'images' (perceptibles) to be of no value as an aid to knowledge because 'only with prior knowledge of the Forms is it possible to recognize whether anything is an "image" and what it is an "image" of'. My illustration of a reflection in water may be rounded off by P.'s brief mention of the same parallel at 402b.

<sup>2</sup> 479e, where θεωμένους and ὁρῶντας give a further hint that in spite of 478a the difference between δόξα and ἐπιστήμη is one of degree rather than kind.

<sup>3</sup> *Frr.* 6.8 and 1.30 (βροτῶν δόξας αἷς οὐκ ἐνι πίστις ἀληθείης).

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for being only expressible, as Aristotle complained, in metaphorical language. (This is more fully discussed in the next section.)

Today the philosopher's complaint is that Plato's way of speaking about 'objects' of knowledge and *doxa* extends the model of perceptual knowledge (if I see something it must be there) to knowledge expressed in propositions (I know that something happened, or is the case), confusing knowledge by acquaintance with knowledge by description, *cognoscere* with *scire*.<sup>1</sup> A Danish philosophy student after hearing a paper on this subject commented that Plato had committed the fallacy of supposing that *because* if I can say 'I know there is a book on the table' then it must be true that there is a book on the table, *therefore* it is necessarily true that there is a book on the table, i.e. it must be always and unchangingly there. In fact empirical truths like the presence of books on tables are not for Plato matters of philosophical knowledge at all, but his limitation of knowledge to the intelligible world of Forms no doubt did prevent him from recognizing a distinction within the empirical world which we find difficult to call other than a distinction between knowledge and belief. 'I believe the book you want is on the table in the next room' expresses a different state of cognition from knowing that a book is on the table because one can see it.

(ii) *Degrees of reality*. Until recently most scholars believed that Plato assigned different degrees of reality (existence) to the physical world, the object of perception and *doxa*, on the one hand, and the intelligible world of changeless Forms on the other. Murphy had denied it in 1951, but was opposed by de Vogel, and the general view is represented by Runciman (1962), who speaks freely of 'Plato's gradational ontology' and says that 'for Plato some things could exist more than others'. 'He at no stage maintained that the sensible

<sup>1</sup> Cross and Woosley 170ff, Flew, *Introd.* 361-4. Are C. and W. right in defining knowledge by description grammatically, as knowledge expressed by a 'that' clause, not by a noun or pronoun? How should we classify sentences like 'I know the procedure of the House of Commons' or 'No one would have behaved like that in Charles I's time; I know my 17th century'? P. had a particular linguistic hurdle to get over. As a Greek, it was natural for him to use ἀληθής to mean real as well as true, and δὴν to mean true as well as real. Thus at *Thr.* 150b and c ἀληθής is contrasted with εἰδωλον and at *Soph.* 263b the man who says 'Theaetetus is flying' speaks of τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα. The question of knowledge by acquaintance and by description will recur in connexion with the *Theaetetus*.

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world had no reality at all' but 'at no stage assigned to it total reality.'<sup>1</sup> More recently however it has been vigorously challenged by Vlastos,<sup>2</sup> who puts forward a clear and simple alternative. 'Real' can mean one of two things, exemplified by (1) Unicorns are not real, (2) These flowers are not real. Unicorns do not exist, but the plastic flowers exist no less than nature's. Plato, Vlastos claims, observed this distinction though he never stated or discussed it. That the double meaning is not a peculiarity of English but shared by its Greek equivalent *ὄν* (lit. 'being') he illustrates by four passages.<sup>3</sup> 'Real' in the sense of genuine, he continues, does admit of degrees (between pure gold and brass is an alloy, between 'a real saint' and a hypocritical villain the indifferent run of mankind), but real in the existential sense does not.<sup>4</sup> No doubt this is what we all believe, but did Plato?

The question is difficult, and probably needs more lengthy treatment than can be given here. But a reader may be made aware of it, and an opinion may be ventured. That in Vlastos's examples 'being' means genuine, not existent, is plain from the fact that Plato does not use the word absolutely but attached to an adjective or noun: 'the real sophist', 'the really good'. And it is the same in the *Republic*. At 479b, after mentioning things fair and foul, just and unjust, great and small, light and heavy, and claiming that each may equally well be called the opposite, he says: 'Then can we say that such things are, any more than that they are not, *any of the many things we say they are?*' And it is after that that he goes on to speak of them as 'between not-being and pure being'. There is, then, certainly evidence for the view that Plato is not here asserting that physical objects with their apparently contrary properties are intermediate between existence and non-existence as had been too easily assumed.

<sup>1</sup> Murphy, *Interpr.* 126-9, 150, 200; de Vogel, *Proc. 11th Int. Congr. of Phil.*, vol. 12, 63 n. 12; Runciman, *PLe* 66, 21 and elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> (a) 'Degrees of Reality in P.', in *New Essays* ed. Bambrough, 1-19; (b) 'A Metaphys. Paradox', *Proc. and Add. Am. Ph. Ass.* 1966, 5-19. Rist has followed V. in *Phoenix* 1967, 284: 'there is no question of a degrees of existence theory in P.'

<sup>3</sup> *Soph.* 268d τὸν ὄντως σοφιστήν, 'the real sophist'; *Rep.* 396b, *Phaedr.* 238c, *Prot.* 328d.

<sup>4</sup> The contrary supposition is even more cavalierly dismissed by Crombie (*EPD* II, 66), who rejects a certain interpretation of *Rep.* 5 on the grounds that by adopting it 'we should have to find a place for the objects of *doxa* "between existence and non-existence" - and that means nothing'.

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But he does not always attach being to a predicate. Vlastos asks us (*MP* 9) to consider *Pol.* 293 e, where after speaking of the perfect state, he adds that the others 'must not be called genuine nor yet really real (οὐδ' ὄντως οὐσας)'.<sup>1</sup> Here, says Vlastos, 'real' cannot mean 'existing', because 'the constitutions which are said to be not really real are precisely the existing ones'. This simply begs the question. In our eyes they exist, but that they existed in the eyes of the originator of the doctrine of Forms is just what he is trying to prove in the face of what he rightly calls 'the overwhelming majority of modern interpreters', who believe that Plato took a different view of the meaning of existence from that of most men. He is, after all, the man who said that practice was further from truth than theory (p. 484 above).

Vlastos also directs us to *Tim.* 52 a, where Plato says there are three categories: unchanging Forms, their changing namesakes, and space. The 'are' (εἶναι), he thinks, which applies to all alike, is 'clearly existential'. To call the Form 'really real' is 'not to assert, but to categorize, its existence'. This is not necessarily so. The verb 'to be' is a difficult one to get rid of, and Plato's expression is by no means always technical and precise. Perhaps if he bothered more about it he would have said something like 'we have to reckon with three factors'.<sup>2</sup> (No noun would have been needed in Greek.) One could wish Vlastos had also considered 27 d–28 a, where, as we have noted (p. 490 above), the objects of knowledge and *doxa* are distinguished as respectively 'what always is and has no becoming' and 'what always becomes but never is'.<sup>3</sup> This is a careful statement of a basic premise, and here if anywhere the 'is' is existential, and clearly describes perceptible things, subject to change, becoming and perishing, as not fully existing.

Here also, as in the closely related question of knowledge and

<sup>1</sup> It might even be argued that by saying οὐ γνησίας οὐδ' ὄντως οὐσας P. is explicitly distinguishing real = existing from real = genuine.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Hackforth on γένεσις εἰς οὐσίαν at *Phil.* 26 d (*PEP* 49 n. 2).

<sup>3</sup> Not only ὄν οὐδέποτε but ὄντως οὐδέποτε ὄν. P. uses the phrase ὄντως ὄν in a number of places (p. 494 n. 3 above), and rather than regard it as a tautology (or as Vlastos does) I suggest it means 'not really existing'. Once again the case is different when the phrase is used with a predicate, as at *Pol.* 291 c ἀπὸ τῶν ὄντως ὄντων πολιτικῶν καὶ βασιλικῶν. *Rep.* 585 c–d is another passage where the idea of degrees of reality is extremely difficult to get rid of.



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*doxa*, any solution must take account of the historical situation. To the principle of the modern philosopher, that Plato can only have made certain presuppositions if they 'make sense' (i.e. make sense to one with twentieth-century presuppositions), may be opposed the rhetorical question of a French scholar.<sup>1</sup> 'Et de quel droit, je me demande, refuser à un auteur antique, eût-il, si possible, plus de génie encore que Platon, la permission de s'arrêter à des théories qui, pour nous, sont fantastiques? Que seront donc beaucoup des nôtres dans deux mille ans?' Granted that he did not share all our presuppositions, Plato's theories may not seem so fantastic after all.

The Greek verb 'to be' (*einai*), in ordinary speech, had even more uses than its counterpart in modern English. It could signify existence, predication, identification, class-membership, definition, truth of a statement. (God is, God is good, Jones is the Prime Minister, Jones is a man, man is a rational biped, you have said what is not.) These uses had not been sorted out by Plato's time. He did much analytical work on them himself, especially in the later dialogues, but it was only completed by Aristotle. It is not surprising, then, if even he, when he wrote the *Republic*, was not completely free of the confusion initiated by Parmenides and exploited by the Sophists; and indeed it is obvious that much of his philosophy is the outcome of a real struggle to free himself from the consequences of the simple but devastating assertion that what is, is, and cannot not be; what is not is not and cannot be. Nothing therefore can change or come into being, for what is does not become (since it is already) and nothing could come to be out of what is not.<sup>2</sup> No one disputes that Parmenides was confining the word to its existential sense,<sup>3</sup> and we have to consider what would have been a natural reaction to his dilemma, and what would have seemed an adequate solution. Somehow the changing world must be saved from complete non-entity,<sup>4</sup> and so the inter-

<sup>1</sup> See Crombie, *EPD* II, 156; Diès, *A. de P.* 265.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ar. Phys.* 191a30. For a summary of Parmenides's influence on P. see pp. 34f. above. For Parmenides himself, vol. II, 20ff.

<sup>3</sup> Some have said that he was confusing the existential with the copulative use, but I think we mean the same thing. He reduced all senses of *einai* to the existential, and on this depended the effectiveness of his paradoxes.

<sup>4</sup> There is historical truth in the dictum that the object of the doctrine of Forms was not to abolish the sensible world but to save it.

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mediate position found for it had to be between being and non-being *in the Parmenidean sense*. If these terms had no ontological significance, if they *merely* meant that particular things are or are not beautiful or large or heavy, that they differ from Forms only in the constancy of their characteristics, their knowability and their value, the theory of an intermediate region would not have served its purpose. Plato described perceptible things sometimes as between being and not being beautiful, large etc., sometimes as becoming and changing as opposed to being *tout court*. He saw no difference because the facts that a thing could grow from small to large or be either of these in relation to other things or from other viewpoints were for him evidence that they were neither non-existent nor fully existent. Existence, changelessness and absoluteness are in his mind inseparable.<sup>1</sup>

Another way of putting it might be this. Part of Vlastos's difficulty, as he makes clear on the first page of *MP*, is that he himself cannot believe in a gradational ontology, so it worries him that a great philosopher should have done so. But did not Descartes? Flew (*Introd.* 286) quotes from him as follows: 'I am as it were situated between sovereign being and non-existence...participating in some way in nothingness or non-existence.' His explanation was that his being was *dependent* on another's, namely God's, and this surely is at the root of Plato's view of perceptibles. Whether through the metaphors of participation and imitation, or by the simple dative,<sup>2</sup> what he is saying is that they are dependent on the Forms for such being as they have. What did he mean when he said in the Cave simile that puppets are 'more real' than their shadows (μᾶλλον ὄντα, 515 d)? What indeed do we mean when we say that a man is more real than his shadow? Not, perhaps, that he exists more than his shadow, or even that he is more 'genuine', but that the shadow's existence is a secondary one, dependent on the existence and presence of the man

<sup>1</sup> Cf. esp. the whole description of τὸ καλόν at *Symp.* 210e-211c, in which Solmsen (*AJP* 1971) has pointed out echoes of Parm.'s description of τὸ ὄν. On the view here offered, αὐτὸ δ' ἔστι καλόν means both 'that which is absolutely beautiful' and 'that beautiful itself which *is*' (exists).

<sup>2</sup> τῷ καλῷ τὰ κατὰ καλὰ, p. 118 with n. 3, 352 with n. 2. Conversely αὐτὸ τὸ καλόν is entirely unaffected by the becoming and perishing of the many κατὰ that share in it.

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and a source of light.<sup>1</sup> As a final point, while we are right to draw a logical distinction between the existential and other uses of the verb 'to be', yet as H. W. B. Joseph said, 'A thing to be at all, must be something, and can only be what it is.'<sup>2</sup>

Two further points which occur for the first time in this passage can be best discussed in the light of evidence from later dialogues. *First*, at 476a injustice and badness are mentioned as Forms along with justice and good. Did Plato really believe in Forms of (a) negations and (b) evil? We are accustomed to thinking that he associated being with value, Forms being perfect in both respects. (The Form of Good is the sustaining cause of all the rest, p. 506 below.) Another difficulty (which I have not seen mentioned by scholars) is that a Form is a unity, and at 445c Plato has said that there is only one kind<sup>3</sup> of goodness (*aretē*) but innumerable kinds of evil. *Secondly*, at 476a again we have the first mention of the association of Forms not only with actions and physical objects but with *each other*. This is not explained or mentioned again until the *Sophist*,<sup>4</sup> where it acquires great importance.

### (9) THE PHILOSOPHER AND SOCIETY (6.487B-502C)

In sum, the philosopher is an amalgam of all good qualities: companion of truth, justice, courage and self-mastery, of good memory, quick to learn, dignified and gracious. All are necessary if he is to see reality as it is.<sup>5</sup> This stings Adeimantus into saying what very many must have felt about S. There is a fear that by his method of question and answer he leads them on by small steps, each one seeming incontro-

<sup>1</sup> The above owes something to a letter from Professor F. H. Sandbach.

<sup>2</sup> *Introd. to Logic* 408.

<sup>3</sup> εἶδος. At the moment P. may only have in mind the weaker sense of form or kind, but even so the word seems to make it impossible that there should ever be ἐν εἶδος κακίας.

<sup>4</sup> Which has made some unnecessarily suspicious of the received text. For τῇ ἀλλήλων κοινωνίᾳ Badham wanted to read ἄλλη ἄλλων, Bywater ἄλλ' ἄλλων. But see Adam, App. vii to bk 5, *Rep.* 1, 362-4. On a difference here between *Rep.* and *Soph.* see Anscombe, *Monist* 1966, 406. See too Grube, *P.'s Th.* 22 n. 2 and opinions referred to there.

<sup>5</sup> And this is one reason for the rarity of the philosopher, for these qualities do not commonly go together (503c-d).

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vertible, until like unskilful chess players they find themselves checkmated and talked out of what they know to be true. (It is what Meno called his wizardry.) So now, they cannot fault his arguments, but in fact people who carry philosophy into adult life, instead of dropping it when their schooldays are over, become oddities, useless at the best and at the worst complete rogues.<sup>1</sup>

Quite true, replies S. surprisingly – but the fault is not the genuine philosopher's. Philosophers have this reputation for three reasons: (a) Society will not employ them. (b) It corrupts them. (c) Sham philosophers take over in their place.

(a) is explained by the famous parable of the Ship of State, a bitter satire on Athenian democracy.<sup>2</sup> The master<sup>3</sup> (the people in a Greek democracy) is strong but inefficient. Each of the crew (politicians) thinks he should be steersman, though they have never learned navigation and claim it cannot be taught. They pester the master to let them take the helm, and if one lot succeeds the others throw them overboard. Finally some of them drug him and take over the ship, rifle the stores and turn the voyage into an orgy, hailing as a first-class navigator whoever will assist their nefarious plan. They have no idea that navigation is a science demanding long study of stars, winds and seasons. On a ship run like this, will not the true navigator be called useless, a babbler and star-gazer?<sup>4</sup>

For navigation read *aretē* (for virtue is knowledge), and the parable repeats earlier lessons. In the *Protagoras* S. noted that the Athenian system demands no qualifications for government, and in the *Gorgias* he condemned the view that the proper aim of political power was personal gain.

(b) In yet another description of the philosopher's character, S.

<sup>1</sup> It will be remembered that exactly the same criticism was made by Callicles in *Gorg.* (484c–485e, pp. 289 f. above), and in real life a similar one was brought against P. by Isocrates (p. 309).

<sup>2</sup> For a challenging criticism of the outlook represented by this parable see Bambrough, 'P.'s Political Analogues', in *P., Popper and Politics* 152–69.

<sup>3</sup> Scholars are fond of pointing out that to translate ναύκληρος as 'captain' is wrong. He is the owner, a merchant travelling with his own wares. On the other hand the translation 'ship-owner', with its suggestion of an Onassis, could be even more misleading.

<sup>4</sup> These terms (μετεωροσκόπον τε καὶ ἀδολέσχην) show that P.'s 'true navigator' was still S. himself (p. 431 n. 3 above), the only man who understood the true art of politics (*Gorg.* 521d).

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combines his recent language with the *Symposium*'s terminology of love and procreation. Not content with the many objects of *doxa*, he will not cease from his passion (*eros*) until he makes contact with the essential nature of each thing. This he will approach with that part of his mind which is akin to it, and having intercourse with it will bring forth *nous* and truth and so, released from the birth-pangs, will find knowledge and true life and nourishment. To complete this picture of the Platonic philosopher (and it is important to distinguish him from most of his counterparts in other ages), S. adds at 500c-d that by his acquaintance with the divine and orderly he himself becomes divine and orderly so far as a man may. (Like knows like, as older philosophers had said.)

Such a character is extremely rare, and its very virtues, especially if combined with material advantages like wealth, influential connexions, good looks and strength, will lay it open to corruption. It is a biological law that in unsuitable conditions of climate, soil or food, the choicest specimens – plants or animals – suffer worst. In the same way the most gifted natures are most affected by the lure of popularity and success in our corrupt society, which flatters them because it wants to use them for its own purposes. If in spite of this such a one should show signs of being converted to philosophy, his friends will resort to any kind of intrigue to prevent it, even to prosecuting his good counsellor.

The vivid realism of this account points to particular cases, and is generally thought to refer to Alcibiades. One may compare the words attributed to him at *Symp.* 216b (pp. 378f. above), and the description of how such a man will react on being told the truth (494d). Is there not also an element of autobiography? Plato himself had felt the lure of politics and the importunities of highly-placed relatives, seen the prosecution of his mentor in philosophy and agreed with him that there was no place for a philosopher in public life.

(c) At the same time, because the *name* of philosophy still wins respect and position, an inferior crowd, whose proper place is in the banausic occupations, invade its territory 'like criminals taking refuge in a temple'. It is these impostors who have given philosophers the reputation of being not only useless but wicked. They exemplify the

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mischievous done by giving an education to those who, because they are not fit for it, inevitably misuse it.

Point (c) reminds us that the word 'philosophy' was a term of approval seized on by men of widely different aims and outlooks. Each had the 'true' philosophy, and his rivals were eristics, sophists or unpractical dreamers. This was particularly true of Plato and Isocrates, and the present passage should be read in conjunction with the summary of the latter's philosophy on pp. 309-11. For Isocrates no philosophy deserved the name unless it led to effective speech and action in affairs of state. Plato was sensitive to this criticism, on behalf of both himself and S., as the *Gorgias* and Adeimantus's incredulity both show.

The upshot is that any who remain true to philosophy (and it may need abnormal pressures to make them do so, like exile, ill health or in S.'s case his divine sign) see the hopelessness of attempting to improve things on their own, and simply cherish their personal integrity in retirement like a man sheltering from a storm under a wall. Only in the Platonic state can philosophy come into its own; but even this, like all great enterprises, is risky, and as S. strikingly puts it, they have to consider how a state can find room for philosophy without destroying itself. Philosophy is dynamite. Later (537e ff.) he expatiates on the destructive spirit of lawlessness which dialectic itself can arouse. The harm is done because pupils are introduced to it too young, and the remedy is a complete reversal of the popular and sophistic view. Philosophy, far from being a study suitable only for the young, should be reserved for adults. 'The young, when they get their first taste of argument, turn it into a sport, and just use it to contradict their neighbours...behaving like puppies who enjoy pulling and worrying at everything within reach.'<sup>1</sup>

They must not be too hard on the public. It has never been told the true character of philosophers. Most men react well if things are explained to them in a reasonable and good-humoured way. Their prejudice against philosophy is simply due to the disorderly rabble who have usurped the title and disgrace it with mutual abuse and factiousness. Once they know what the true philosopher is about,

<sup>1</sup> 539b. The same point is made amusingly at *Phil.* 15d-e.

their prejudice will evaporate.<sup>1</sup> And what is he about? Knowing the realm of reality, where all is reason and order, he will use it as a pattern for his remodelling of society. He will not introduce piecemeal reforms but make himself a clean canvas by wiping out existing institutions and habits,<sup>2</sup> then sketch and fill in the outline of his own constitution, with frequent reference to his divine model, to make human ways acceptable to God. When these aims are explained to the people, they will surely give up their resentment against philosophers, and if even one can be found uncorrupted, grant him power and obey him.

There is one curious point about the philosopher's fitness to rule. It may sound logical (even if we remain sceptical) that because his mind is fixed on the immutable realities of the divine order, he alone can order human affairs according to the highest standards. But it is freely admitted that for the same reason he will despise the world of men and be most unwilling to take an active part in it. Plato frequently says that he will only govern under compulsion (500d, 519c *et al.*), and it even becomes an advantage that he would prefer a different life (520d–521b). Stranger still, he 'has no time to look down at the affairs of men'<sup>3</sup> and *therefore* will be good at implanting in society the divine pattern of justice and civic virtue as a whole (500b). This is one of the points at which philosophy becomes autobiography (if indeed it is not that all the time), for surely this mirrors the conflict in Plato's own *psyche*. Unwilling himself to enter politics, he yet felt ashamed of his reluctance (pp. 25 f. above), and so evolved the remarkable idea that a philosopher could not take part in the politics of any existing society, but only in an ideal one (cf. esp. 9.592a), and at the same time that the ideal one would never be realized until the philosopher agreed to take part in politics.

<sup>1</sup> This good-hearted but misinformed crowd sounds very different from the 'great beast' of 492b–493d, the real cause of trouble, whose whims the Sophists merely follow. No doubt Plato's attitude to the *demos* was in fact ambivalent.

<sup>2</sup> At present, as the context shows, the philosopher is only supposed to be producing a paper scheme to convince the people of his fitness for power. How he will get his clean canvas in practice, namely by banishing everyone over ten years old, is told at 540e–541a.

<sup>3</sup> 500b–d makes the same point as *Phdr.* 249c–d: the man who remembers the divine vision stands aside from human concerns, draws near to the divine, and is abused as mad by the multitude who do not know that he is inspired.

## *The Form of the Good*

### (10) THE FORM OF THE GOOD (6.502C-7.519B)

So ends what was, formally at least, a series of digressions, or elaborations, demanded by the other parties to the discussion: relations between the sexes in the Platonic city, its practicability, and the reasons why philosophers are failures in existing societies. S. now returns to the few who have so far survived the tests for future Guardians. They must next be tested for ability to stand up to the severest intellectual disciplines, for they have to rise to an understanding of the greatest of all objects of knowledge, higher even than the Justice which S. and his friends have so far sought: they must grasp the Form of the Good. Without it all other knowledge is useless, for what do we gain from any possession or course of action unless it conduces to our good? Others may make their choices by *doxa* alone, but for the Guardians nothing short of knowledge of the Good will do, for it is their responsibility to guide the beliefs of the many and to govern for the good, and happiness, of their society.

*The Socratic heritage.* This is a sharp reminder that, as we know, *agathon* for a Greek did not coincide in meaning with the English 'good', and in particular that it had not necessarily any moral force.<sup>1</sup> To say that morally right actions are not necessarily good, but only if they bring 'usefulness and advantage' (are χρήσιμα καὶ ὠφέλιμα, 505a), sounds shocking. It is rather the other way round. Yet though Plato's point is Socratic, it would not have seemed paradoxical. In the *Meno* too, *sophrosynē*, justice and courage are among activities of the soul which may be harmful unless guided by superior knowledge. Without that they are only the popular conceptions (*doxai*) of these virtues. He can also say (505d) that whereas in the case of justice many prefer the appearance to the reality, they would certainly not be satisfied with the appearance (*doxa*) of good, but only with the real thing. The good is what we most want, or think worth having, either in a particular sphere or more generally. The good for a commander in the field is victory, for a boxer to achieve a knock-out, for

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship's *Lectures* pp. 218-33 are excellent, and indeed essential reading for anyone who would understand the Greek and Platonic conceptions of good.



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a miser money, for a surgeon a successful operation. The good for a ship's captain is to get his passengers safely to their destination. It does not concern him if for one of his passengers drowning would be preferable to continuing a life of disease and unhappiness.<sup>1</sup>

The Good, then, is, in Plato's words (505 e, trans. Lee), 'the end of all endeavour, the object on which every heart is set, whose existence it divines, though it finds it difficult to grasp just what it is; and because it can't handle it with the same assurance as other things, it misses any value those other things have'. Whatever a man desires so strongly that he would put it before everything else is for him the good, and if you believe, as Socrates and Plato did, that there is an absolute good, 'man's chief end', then obviously no other knowledge can be so important as the knowledge of what this is. S. believed that not only man, but everything in the world, had a function to perform, its fitness to perform it was its 'virtue', and the performance was the good for it.<sup>2</sup> For human beings it was the key to happiness. So far Plato is Socratic, but in the light of his theory of Forms he went further. A cause is prior to its effects, and since, for particular enterprises or life as a whole, the Good was the cause of their goodness, it was in itself not only an eternal, changeless Form 'by which' good particulars are good (as just acts are dependent on the Form of Justice) but stood at the head of the hierarchy of Forms. What this means he will try to explain.

As a follower of S. Plato is now at the crucial point of his philosophy. He is going to tackle the ultimate question which S. left unanswered: What is the nature of absolute goodness? S.'s continual equation of 'good' with useful or beneficial, even in its most general form as conducive to the chief end of human life, did not determine what that chief end was. Unlike the Sophists, he had an unshakable faith that there was such an absolute end, or objective standard, and he went far beyond them in his teaching that the object to be benefited was

<sup>1</sup> So P. himself in *Gorg.* (vol. III, 409). In Xen. *Mem.* 4.2.32, S. showed how good health (one of the recognized 'goods') might lead to harm, and the case of Theages in *Rep.* (496b) was one where sickness proved a blessing.

<sup>2</sup> S.'s notion of goodness emerges at many points in the second part of vol. III, esp. pp. 442 and 462 ff.; also p. 90 n. 1. Nettleship claims, probably rightly, that the teleological outlook was characteristically Greek.

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the *psyche*; but his own confession that he himself had not that knowledge of it which was virtue, but was all his life a seeker, led to some justified, if not always good-tempered criticism.<sup>1</sup> The Socratic background must never be lost sight of if we are to understand the tremendous importance attached by Plato to the discovery of the Form of the Good, and the ineffably exalted position which he gives it. That it is his starting-point is shown by the way in which he makes S. return to his profession of ignorance. His only superiority lay in his deeper insight into the procedure by which the knowledge must be sought. So here, true to his spirit but going beyond him, Plato in his name maps out a strenuous curriculum, lasting from childhood to thirty-five, which must be mastered before anyone can hope to attain the knowledge, and as yet not even S. has been through it. Even the practical and superficially utilitarian criterion is retained, for the question is: What must be present to every action and every possession commonly called good, to guarantee that it will be unfailingly useful and advantageous?

*Two views rejected (505b-c).* Two views are briefly rejected, the popular one that it is pleasure, and the 'more refined' that it is knowledge. Champions of the first are inconsistent, for they are forced to admit that there are bad pleasures.<sup>2</sup> Those of the second argue in a circle, for if asked 'Knowledge of what?', they can only reply absurdly, 'Of the Good'. Here Plato puts his finger on the weakness of S. himself.<sup>3</sup>

Even the Platonic Socrates frankly disclaims direct knowledge of the Good,<sup>4</sup> but hopes to throw light on it by analogy. He employs three figures, whose significance and mutual relations were already said in 1921 to have been more debated than any other part of Plato's

<sup>1</sup> For exposition of this theme a reader must be referred to vol. III, 485-8. See also 462 ff.

<sup>2</sup> As Callicles had to in *Gorg.* (p. 291 above). The subject has also been discussed in *Prot.*, where S. pretends to go along with the popular view (pp. 232 ff.). But its fullest discussion is still to come, in *Philebus*.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. *Euthydemus*, esp. 292 b ff. If, as some have thought, it may be ascribed to particular people among his followers - Antisthenes or the Megarians - that only shows that they were followers.

<sup>4</sup> 'Let us leave aside at present the question of what the Good is in itself, for I think it is too much for our present efforts' (506d-e).

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writings.<sup>1</sup> Since then the stream of rival interpretations has flowed steadily on.

*The Good and the sun* (507b–509c). He begins with a comparison of the Good to the sun. After a reminder of the basic distinction between visible particulars and intelligible Forms, he says that what the sun is to the visible world, the Good is to the intelligible (508b–c). The points of resemblance are four. (1) As the eye can only see a visible object if a third element, light (derived from the sun) is present, so the mind can only grasp an intelligible object (Form) if both are illuminated by the Good. (2) As the sun not only makes things visible but is responsible for their generation and growth,<sup>2</sup> so the Good not only makes the Forms intelligible but sustains their being. (3) As the sun, besides making visibility possible, is itself visible, so the Good is intelligible; but (4) as the sun provides for (παρέχει) birth and growth without being these processes itself, so the Good is not itself Being but superior even to Being in worth and power.

In the Good, then, Plato combines three conceptions: the end of life, supreme object of desire and aspiration; the condition of knowledge, which makes the world intelligible and the human mind intelligent; and the sustaining cause of the Forms, which are in their turn the creative causes of natural objects and human actions.<sup>3</sup> The union of these apparently disparate ideas is explained not only by general Greek patterns of thought (as Nettleship showed) but also by the special problem with which Socrates and Plato felt themselves faced in the Sophistic equation of intellectual scepticism with moral

<sup>1</sup> Ferguson, *CQ* 1921, 131. For the 'enormous literature' on the Form of the Good, Adam (II, 51) refers to Zeller, 2.1.709ff., 718 n. 1. References to some of the later discussions will be found in my notes and bibliography; and a summary up to 1954 is given by Ross in *Fifty Years of Class. Schol.* 136.

<sup>2</sup> The Greeks emphasized this function of the sun much more than we do. The idea of the earth as female and mother and the sun as father was not confined to mythology. Cf. Aristotle's dictum 'A man is generated by a man and the sun' (*Phys.* 194b13), and *idem*, *GA* 716a15–17 and elsewhere.

<sup>3</sup> In what sense the Forms are causes has been discussed already (pp. 349–51). The above description is largely taken from Nettleship 218, but I have modified the third feature. For P.'s meaning cf. *Phaedo* 99c. The sun is not merely analogous to the Good. It is its 'offspring' (506e, 508b), and this is not wholly metaphorical, for in the final analysis the cause of light in the world is the Good itself (517c).

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anarchy (which was a leading theme of the previous volume). Because of it, a discussion of ethical and political ideals could not dispense with metaphysical inquiry. Absolute standards of right and wrong could only be restored along with belief in a world of stable and comprehensible reality. So, as we pursue Plato's ontological and epistemological speculations, we must never forget that they are also axiological: supreme reality is supreme goodness and also the supremely intelligible, only to be grasped through a rigorous process of intellectual training. As here it is the 'greatest object of learning' (525 a), so in the *Symposium* (211 c), under its alias of Beauty, it is the final objective of scientific training. But as Taylor pointed out (*PMW* 231), the *Symposium* also shows that its mode of apprehension, though attainable only *after* a long and arduous process, is by 'direct acquaintance', as a sudden revelation, not by discursive 'knowledge about' it. To understand what Plato is trying to convey, we should not neglect clues from other dialogues. Since it cannot be described literally, no single account can do it justice. The effect is cumulative. The dialogue form, and Plato's own imaginative powers, made it possible for him to present it from different angles, using different metaphors and parallels.

We may well share Glaucon's amazement at being told that the Good is 'beyond Being', but what Plato has in mind is something like this. In his teleological world, if one knows that something *is*, or exists, there is always the further question, What is it *for*? What is the *good* of it? The good of a thing is the final explanation of its existence. But for Goodness itself there is no such further question. It is the justification of its own existence, like happiness in the *Symposium* (205 a), where 'it is not legitimate to go on to ask, "Why does anyone want to be happy?"' The answer is complete.<sup>1</sup>

The argument here makes it even more difficult to believe that there are Forms of what is evil, for with the conception of Goodness as the ground of existence, it would seem inescapable that 'Evil enters the world as non-existence, a negative that eats into reality

<sup>1</sup> I suspect that those who puzzle over the question why the Good is ἀνυπόθετον are in the same position as S. and his friends over the discovery of Justice: it has been 'rolling at their feet' the whole time.

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and destroys its goodness... The more real a thing is the better it is. A thing is evil in so far as it fails to be real.'<sup>1</sup>

*The Divided Line* (509d–517e). The simile of the sun, says S., though it illustrates the main division of the sum of things into visible and intelligible, is incomplete, and on being begged to complete it, he does so by changing the symbolism in order to elaborate the simple twofold division into a fourfold one.<sup>2</sup> Imagine a line divided into two unequal<sup>3</sup> parts, and each part subdivided in the same ratio. The main divisions represent<sup>4</sup> the visible and intelligible worlds as in the previous simile. The subdivisions in the visible world are (a) images, specified as shadows, reflections 'and the like', (b) actual objects of the natural and man-made world ('animals, plants and every kind of manufactured object'),<sup>5</sup> and S. invites Glaucon to agree that as the two parts of the lower section stand to each other in respect of their reality (ἀληθείᾳ τε καὶ μῇ, 510a9), so are objects of belief (*doxa*) to objects of knowledge; that is, as copies to originals.

<sup>1</sup> Jacques, *Rep.* 98. The question cannot well be decided without evidence from later dialogues. Perhaps, however, Thayer exaggerates (in *PQ* 1964, 6 n. 14) the duality of the concept of κακία as either negative (lack of ἀρετή) or a positive power opposed to good. When P. takes the trouble to add, after μὴ ἔχοντα... ἀρετήν (353c, which gives the negative idea of absence of ἀρετή perfectly adequately), ἀντὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς κακίαν, this suggests that he thought of (e.g.) the bluntness (lack of sharpness) of a knife as something positively harmful. There is in fact no neutral state: absence of ἀρετή means presence of κακία, an active power for harm. It is not true that the blunt knife, if used, will leave the vine neither better nor worse than it was before.

<sup>2</sup> Before plunging into the welter of conflicting interpretations of the Line and the Cave, a student would be well advised to start with Nettleship's readable account in *Lectt.* 238–61. It will help him to keep his head.

<sup>3</sup> ἄνισα must be correct, for otherwise the words ἀνὰ τὸν αὐτὸν λόγον would be otiose, but P. makes no use of the inequality in his exposition. The common explanation (see Adam II, 64) is that it symbolizes the proportion in 'clearness' between the objects or mental states described, but (a) that should be obvious from their position on the line, and (b) it would make the physical world equal in clearness to the objects of διάνοια, since the two middle segments of the line must be equal.

<sup>4</sup> Pace Murphy, *Interpr.* 156f. I do not find his rendering of this conversationally-constructed sentence at all convincing. Cf. ὥσπερ sense II in LSJ.

<sup>5</sup> Raven, who attaches weight to his belief that ὁρατόν is literal and not a label for αἰσθητόν in general, says it can hardly be disputed that P. is here describing objects of sight as opposed to other senses (*CQ* 1953, 24). Anyone who has bumped into a tree at night might be disposed to dispute it. I believe therefore that τὸ ὁρατόν here is the same as τὸ σωματοειδές καὶ ὁρατόν at 532c–d. Sight is in both passages said to be the keenest of our senses, and in the present analogy, certainly, advantage is taken of the fact that it requires a medium. It is noticeable how philosophers of later periods too (e.g. in the present century Price, Ayer and Austin) turn overwhelmingly to vision for their illustrations of sense-perception in general.

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In explaining the subdivisions of the upper section, more emphasis is laid on states of mind than on their objects; indeed the objects appear to be the same, namely Forms, seen by different methods and with different degrees of understanding. We have seen, however, that in a way this is true even of the objects of *doxa* and knowledge (pp. 489–92 above). First (lower subdivision) the *psyche* treats the originals of the lower main section (objects in the physical world) as themselves images, and bases its inquiries on assumptions (*hypotheses* in Greek), not progressing from them to a primary principle but using them as premises to argue deductively to a conclusion. Then (upper subdivision) it proceeds from assumptions or hypotheses to a self-authenticating (lit. ‘unhypothesized’) first principle, making no use of sensible things at all, but only of Forms, ‘moving through Forms from one to the other and ending with Forms’ (511c).

To illustrate the lower subsection S. takes the example of mathematicians. First, they posit certain things – odd and even numbers, various kinds of figure and angle and so on – which they regard as basic and ‘known’ (ὡς εἰδότες 510c), and with these as premises work out their theorems through consistent steps of argument. Secondly, they make use of visible models and diagrams,<sup>1</sup> knowing that, as there can be shadows and reflections of them, so they in their turn are only reflections (lit. ‘images’) of the Forms, e.g. ‘the square itself’, which are the actual subject of their researches and can only be ‘seen’ (Plato’s word) with the mind. I think it must be agreed that the objects of thought, whose nature the mathematician studies through the medium of their visible images, are Forms (of square etc.), not the ‘mathematicals’ which nevertheless Plato did posit as intermediate between Forms and sensibles (pp. 342–5 above).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Called by P. ‘visible forms’ (εἰδη). So far from fixed is his terminology.

<sup>2</sup> The view that they are intermediates goes back to Proclus and has been greatly disputed. It was the firm opinion of Adam (*Rep.* II, 68 and 159 ff.) and more recently Hardie (*S. in P.* 52 ff.). Their arguments are criticized by Brentlinger in *Phron.* 1963, 147 ff., who however brings fresh arguments in favour of the thesis. Cornford (*Mind* 1932, 38) noted that the objects of διδασκαλία can be objects of νόησις when seen μετὰ ἀρχῆς; Stocks (*CQ* 1911, 83) that the introduction of intermediates would destroy the parallelism with the world of sense. For the use of images as a means to the knowledge of Forms in general, including Forms of values, see Cooper in *CQ* 1966. Wedberg, after a sensible discussion, concludes (*PPM* 109): ‘Although the doctrine of Intermediates is not clearly expressed in the *Republic*, it is, so to speak, striving to come to the surface.’ Some of the many other participants in the discussion will be found

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Even the philosopher is 'reminded' of Forms in the first instance through their copies in the physical world (pp. 345 f.), and mathematics is only a systematic training in how to achieve this, which accounts for its usefulness as a propaedeutic to dialectic. In the *Meno* the slave, if he were capable of completing the process begun by S.'s questions about a geometrical problem, would understand not only geometry but 'all other subjects', because 'the truth about existing things' (or realities, i.e. Forms) 'is always in the *psyche*'.<sup>1</sup>

This stage, then, called by Plato *dianoia* (thought or reasoning), is the recognition of Forms through sensible particulars. We remember that the Socratic *hypothesis* in the *Phaedo* was the existence of the Forms as causes (p. 352 above). Any testing of it by a higher hypothesis was omitted because all those present accepted it. It raises its user from the state of the ordinary man, who recognizes only the many transient and imperfect copies of reality, to an awareness of the separate Forms which each imitates. What he has not yet understood is the interrelations of the Forms themselves, and their ultimate dependence on the Good. This is the work of the highest stage, *noesis*, also called *nous* and knowledge (*epistēmē*). Whereas at the previous stage the mind could not rise above its assumptions, but accepted them as ultimate, it now takes them not as ultimate and unchallengeable principles but as genuine *hypotheses* (lit. 'things laid down'), by which the mind rises as by a flight of steps through higher *hypotheses* to the self-authenticating principle and cause of all things. Having grasped this it can look back (in Plato's simile climb down again) and see how it gives meaning and content to all other Forms and shows the intelligible world to be an ordered and organic whole. This is the goal of the dialectical method, which even Socrates, its inventor, did not reach. Short of it, Plato now believes, the philosopher lacks complete understanding (*nous* or *noesis*) of reality – that is the Forms – though they *can* be completely understood (are *noeta*) in

in the bibliography. It is with some reluctance that I have abandoned the intermediates in this context, but I believe it is right to do so. On the point that, if νόσις and διάνοια are different faculties they should have different objects (p. 488 above), pp. 489 f. may be helpful. For more on intermediates see p. 523.

<sup>1</sup> *Meno* 85e, 86b, where μαθήματα should not be confined to mathematical knowledge any more than in the *Rep.* where the Form of the Good is the μέγιστον μάθημα (505a; cf. also *Symp.* 211c).

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conjunction with the first principle of all (511d), which is of course the Good itself.<sup>1</sup>

The end is not just the last step of a process of reasoning (*dianoia*) but, following on that, the sudden recovery of the synoptic vision (σύνοψις, 537c)<sup>2</sup> of the divine order which, as the *Phaedrus* relates, we were granted before birth. In the *Phaedrus* all men, because of that heavenly vision of justice, temperance and the rest, 'in themselves', possess the potentiality of advancing 'from many sensations to a unity embraced by reason' (p. 427 above). This is the path of recollection leading to the Forms, but neither there, nor in the *Symposium* when the philosophic lover reaches the end of his ascent<sup>3</sup> and beholds Beauty itself, is there a hint of a further stage beyond recognition of a Form in isolation, which is all that taking a synoptic view means at *Phdr.* 265d. Now, under the perennial urge to reduce reality to a unity (especially strong among the Greeks but shared by philosophers and scientists from the Ionians to the twentieth century), he goes further.<sup>4</sup> Like the individual and the state, reality as a whole must be organic, unified by the principle of order (*kosmos*) and harmony; or rather, only because it is so, can these desirable qualities be reflected in the human sphere. This must always have been Plato's faith, instilled by the Pythagoreans, but only here does he attempt to explain it in philosophic terms. That the totality of perfect, eternal Forms, and through them the mutable

<sup>1</sup> Bluck's article in *Phron.* 1957 is helpful to an understanding of the upward paths in relation to the method of hypothesis in *Phaedo*. See esp. pp. 26f. and note his illuminating remark that 'we have here the members not of a logical but of a teleological hierarchy'. See also Cornford, *Mind* 1932, 182f., for a brief, clear description in the light of the Socratic procedure in the early dialogues. That the ἀνυπόθετος ἀρχή is the Form of the Good should be obvious, and so far as I know Sayre is alone in denying it. (See *PAM* 46f. Pp. 42-6 contain a detailed examination of the 'upward way' with references to the work of Robinson and others.)

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Robinson, *PED* 174. R.'s whole section on the 'intuition-theory' of the upward path (172-7) is important. P. realized 'that all certainty obtained by inference presupposes a certainty obtained without inference' (p. 176).

<sup>3</sup> ἐπανών...ἀπποίτο τοῦ τέλους (211b), and with ἐπαναβαθμοίς at c3 cf. οὐκ ἐπιβάσεις at *Rep.* 511b.

<sup>4</sup> I do not mean to say that *Phdr.* was written earlier than this part of *Rep.*, though I should not be surprised if it was. If, as many think, the introduction of collection and division suggests a later date, this new method may well have pushed the ideal structure of *Rep.* 6 into the background. On the urge to unity cf. the quotations from Broad and von Weizsäcker in vol. 1 (57 and 78). A scientific work of the 1960s (by R. O. Kapp) bears the title 'Towards a Unified Cosmology'.



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world in which we live, should be sustained, harmonized and irradiated by Goodness is surely a religious rather than a rationally explicable truth, and it is no wonder if his attempt to describe the upward and downward paths lacks detail and leaves many questions in our minds. He himself repeatedly warns us that an adequate description of these ultimate truths would exceed his powers.<sup>1</sup> He never tried again, and in later dialogues his thoughts take a different turn. But when in the *Timaeus* he offers a detailed cosmology, these truths remain: the teleological ordering of our world and its dependence on a higher, the nature of that higher world as itself a perfect *kosmos*, and the supremacy of *nous*. The first cause is not there called the Good, but God, the divine Mind. Some have thought that the Good in the *Republic* is itself Plato's god, but so far as his words go there is no suggestion that it is personal, or anything but the final *object* of thought. Is it anachronistic to suggest that, as in the philosophy of Plato's greatest pupil, 'Mind and its object are the same'?<sup>2</sup> I do not know, nor, I believe, does anyone else. But that it is godlike or divine is certain. So are all the Forms of which it is the chief, for by turning his mind to them the philosopher 'through his familiarity with the divine and orderly becomes himself orderly and divine so far as a man may be'.

*The Cave* (514a-519b). Abruptly Plato turns to a different simile with the words: 'After this, compare our state in respect of education and the lack of it to the following experience.' Only at the end does he say that the new picture is to be applied<sup>3</sup> as a whole to what has gone before (517a-b), and the mention of education introduces a

<sup>1</sup> 506c-e, 509c, 517b, 533a.

<sup>2</sup> *De an.* 430a3: 'For in non-material things thought and its object are the same.' So when he describes his own God, the Unmoved Mover which is pure *νοῦς*, as the object of his own thought, he is only applying his general psychological principles. In Plato the Good appears as formal-final cause, and A. reproached him with neglecting the efficient aspect. Actually, when one takes into account the dynamic upward impulse of *ἔρως* in man and nature, its action is curiously like that of the Unmoved Mover which 'moves as the object of love' (*Metaph.* 1072b3, cf. p. 421 above). But we have not heard P.'s last word on the First Cause.

<sup>3</sup> *προσάπτειν*, which does not bear the mathematical sense of 'apply' (Ross, *PTI* 72). Scholars have got into great difficulties by looking for this kind of one-to-one correspondence between images so different as those of the divided line and the progress from cave to sunlight and the sun. See also Lee, *Rep.* 320 n. 1.

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new aspect, or at least a reminder that this whole metaphysical interlude is intended as a basis for the higher education of the Guardians. The picture is detailed, and not easily condensed. Imagine a long, sloping cave, its entrance out of sight. In it men have been imprisoned since childhood, seated and fastened by legs and neck so that they can only look straight ahead. Behind and above them is a fire, and between them and the fire runs a transverse road, along which a wall has been built, like the screen above which showmen exhibit their puppets. Behind the wall men walk along carrying all sorts of gear<sup>1</sup> and models of men and animals in stone, wood and other materials, in such a way that they (but no part of their bearers) project above the wall. Fixed as they are, the prisoners see nothing but shadows of the moving objects cast on the wall of the cave in front of them. These they assume to be real things, and if the cave has an echo, they will suppose the voices of the bearers to come from the shadows. These prisoners, says S., are 'like ourselves'.

Next suppose one of them released from his bonds and made to stand up and turn round. It will be a painful experience. Dazzled by the light he will be bewildered and incredulous if told that the things he can now imperfectly see are more real than the shadows he was used to, and will turn his aching eyes thankfully back to what he can see more clearly. If he were then dragged forcibly up the rough, steep path to the daylight, he would complain bitterly, and at first be unable to see anything of what he was now told was real. His cure would be gradual. It would be easiest to look at shadows, and then at reflections in water, before turning his eyes to real men and things. The sky itself he would prefer to look at by night, in moonlight or starlight, before facing it by day, and last of all he would be able to look directly at the sun itself. Then he would reason that the sun is responsible for seasons and years and controls the whole visible region, and is indirectly the cause of all that they used to see in the cave.

When he now remembers his previous state and what passed for

<sup>1</sup> I have borrowed Lee's rendering of the very wide term *σκεύη*, which was applied to pots and pans, any tool or utensil, furniture, military equipment, rigging and fitments of ships, in fact any useful man-made object. These obviously correspond to the contents of the second-lowest section of the Line.

wisdom there, he feels pity for his fellow-prisoners and contempt for the honours and prizes which perhaps they awarded for clear vision of the passing shadows and a good memory for their order of succession, so as to guess correctly which would come next. If he then returned to his old seat in the cave, until his eyes got used to the darkness (which might take some time) he would be no good at their guessing-games. They would laugh at him and think that his journey to the upper world had ruined his sight; and if anyone tried to free them in turn and make them go up, they would want to kill him.

Plato himself offers a key to this simile (εἰκὼν, 517a8-c5). The underground dungeon corresponds to the visible world and the fire to the sun. The ascent to the upper world and viewing of things there correspond to the soul's ascent to the intelligible world, where the last and most difficult thing to be seen is the Form of the Good. Once it is perceived we must reason (συλλογιστέα) that it is the cause of everything right and good everywhere, giving birth in the visible world to the sun and itself reigning over the intelligible world, providing truth and *nous* (that highest intuition, above the reasoning process, whereby truth is grasped); and that without the vision of it no one can act wisely in either personal or public affairs.

The Cave, then, repeats the analogy of the Sun in distinguishing a visible from an intelligible realm and likening the Good to the sun in respect of its double power of making its own realm both true (real) and intelligible. In addition the work of discursive reason in tracing out, *after* the vision of the Good, its effect on everything beneath it, recalls the 'downward way' of the Line. A later explanation (532a-d) emphasizes rather the prisoner's progress from cave to sunlight. First Plato compares dialectic to the prisoner's trying, after he has emerged from the cave, to look away from shadows to natural objects, and finally at the sun itself. 'Whoever tries, by the use of reason alone without the senses, to reach the real essence of each thing (the Forms), and perseveres until by *nous* itself he grasps the Good itself, has reached his goal in the intelligible world as the released prisoner did in the visible'. He then reminds us of the educational purpose of all this by adding that 'the release from bonds within the cave, the turning from the shadows to the models and the light, and

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the ascent to the sunlight, the initial inability to look at natural objects and sunlight and recourse to divine<sup>1</sup> appearances in water and shadows of real things, not shadows of models thrown by a light which, compared with the sun, is as insubstantial as themselves' – all this corresponds to a study of the arts already described [*sc.* the mathematical arts] which 'have the power to direct the best part of the soul towards the vision of what is best among realities, as in the simile the most perceptive organ of the body [*sc.* the eye] was directed to what was brightest in the bodily and visible region'.

Then Plato himself tells us that the chained prisoners represent ordinary uneducated humanity,<sup>2</sup> and the whole progress from the first turning round in the cave represents stages in the reformed education prescribed by himself. In his own explanation of the cave as standing for the whole world of nature, nothing is said about the division into (a) shadows and (b) the utensils and models which throw them, and class (a) has caused much distress and dispute among commentators, for, it is objected, not even the most uneducated go through life literally mistaking shadows for real things.<sup>3</sup> But both the *Republic* and other dialogues contain plenty of hints of his meaning. The difficulty, perhaps, is rather in deciding what is meant by the models themselves, for when Plato talks of the *polloi* as living among illusions he generally means only that they are blind to 'real' things, i.e. the Forms. The primary distinction, made in book 5, between the multifarious objects of *doxa* and their single archetypes in the intelligible world is indeed repeated in all three of the present similes; but here we have to draw a distinction within the world of *doxa* itself, where even after its first conversion the soul still sees only the varying contents of the natural world. A strong hint is given by the

<sup>1</sup> 'Divine' because nature is the creation of the divine and so, indirectly, are the shadows and reflections, as opposed to man-made utensils and models and *their* shadows and reflections. So Adam, comparing *Soph.* 266c.

<sup>2</sup> That S. with his 'customary irony' (337a) should have identified himself with them by his *ἦν* at 515a is wholly natural.

<sup>3</sup> Cornford suggested in 1941 (*Rep.* 223 n. 1) that in his day Plato could have found a neater analogue in the cinema. Now the obvious one is television, and it is only too true that its addicts often mistake its distorted shadows for reality. But it really will not do to press P. on every detail of his analogy. At 516b he says that when one brought up from a cave has got used to the light he will be able to gaze at the sun, though he knew perfectly well that no eyes could stand that. (See *Phaedo* 99d, *Laws* 897d.)

mention at 516c of 'honours, praise and privileges' bestowed by the prisoners on the man with keen sight and a knack of remembering which shadows come after which. Cornford aptly compares the inferior (but successful) type of politician who in the *Gorgias* (501a) makes no use of reason but only 'an empirical knack of remembering what usually happens'. Also reminiscent of the *Gorgias* is the philosopher's contempt for such trifles and the suggestion that he will be despised by the crowd and if he tries to impart his superior knowledge to others will risk being killed, as S. was despised by Callicles and warned of his impending fate. (So the prisoner on being first turned round felt not gratitude but anger and dismay.)<sup>1</sup>

Another (not incompatible) possibility is that the shadows represent particulars, and the artefacts that cast them the general notions abstracted from them by the uneducated. All men have this power of generalization, as the *Phaedrus* taught (pp. 404, 427 above), and, as he says here (518b-c), education is not like putting sight into a blind eye but turning a sound one round from darkness to light. So this power needs at least some education for its right use, to see for example that a string of instances is not a definition. Even then, unless it is regulated by a knowledge of the Forms, the popular notion of, say, justice, will be very far from the true one.<sup>2</sup> It is helpful to remember that Plato's aim in constructing an ontology or theory of knowledge is always moral. Any just act can only be an imperfect image of the Form of Justice, but men like Callicles or the Thirty Tyrants do not even recognize just acts as just, let alone Justice itself. They have within them the power to do so, but the desires of the lowest part of the soul have grown too strong to allow them to use it (519a-b).

The whole field of *mimesis* would also be in Plato's mind, which brings us close to the primary education in *musikē* outlined in book 3

<sup>1</sup> There is a Socratic touch in the prisoners' ignorance of their ignorance, which accounts for their anger at being turned round and brought up. So at *Phaedo* 82e the cunning of our prison (the body) lies in the fact that it works by desire and people collaborate in their own imprisonment. Relevant also is Meno's irritation at being reduced to ἀπορία (*Meno* 79e-80b), which is really the first stage of enlightenment, as the slave-demonstration showed. Note that ἀπαιδευσία (514a2) means not only lack of education but positive fierceness or savagery (*Gorg.* 510b, *Thuc.* 3.84.1).

<sup>2</sup> Relevant here is 517d-e, which speaks of 'the shadows of Justice or the images of which they are shadows, and the conception of them held by those who have never seen Justice itself'.

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and the criticism of current poetry, music and drama there and in book 10.<sup>1</sup> These arts are an imitation of life (not of Forms), and as at present taught, not even a good imitation,<sup>2</sup> because the artists do not understand what they are imitating. To anticipate an example in book 10, suppose there is a Form of Bed, changeless, intelligible and a perfect paradigm of all that a bed should be. The carpenter and upholsterer make beds that copy this Form so far as the limitations of their materials allow. But a painter reproduces its appearance only, without necessarily knowing anything of its purpose or how to make it. Similarly men claim that Homer and the tragedians know all the crafts and everything about morality and religion because they write about them, but in fact their works are only ghosts, images or copies<sup>3</sup> of the actions and the values of life itself, and so, since this world is only a copy of the world of Forms, at two removes from reality. These are the shadows of the cave,<sup>4</sup> and the first stage of education is to turn the eye of the soul so that it sees this world as it is and its copies will at least be made from life, not based on lies. This is the function of the primary education described in book 3.<sup>5</sup>

*Historical note on Plato's cave.* Plato did not usually invent the pictorial elements in his myths and allegories, but drew freely on the

<sup>1</sup> This point is well brought out in Tanner's article (*CQ* 1970), who lays proper stress on the function of the allegory as, at least in part, a criticism of current Greek education.

<sup>2</sup> At 401b artists are only to be made to implant 'the image of a good character', not the Good itself. 'We', however, the founders, and our Guardians, must recognize the Forms as well as their images (402b-c). The soldiers, and *a fortiori* the third class, will act upon ὁρθὴ δόξα instilled in them by the ruling Guardians.

<sup>3</sup> φαντάσματα, εἰδωλα, μιμητής, 599a-d.

<sup>4</sup> Hamlyn in *PQ* 1958 has suggested that the lowest section of the Line (corresponding to the shadows of the Cave) represents the teaching of the Sophists, notably Protagoras: 'the state of mind of him who holds that sense-data or appearances are all that there is, who... does not acknowledge that there are also material objects to which inter-personal standards of description and identification are applicable'. These would be included, but (partly in view of ὁμοίους ἡμῖν at 515a) I believe the application to be wider.

<sup>5</sup> In interpreting the Line and the Cave I have not made use of the names P. gives to all four stages of cognition represented, partly because they have no really satisfactory English equivalents and the inconsistent renderings of translators and commentators are confusing, and partly because P. himself does not use them consistently. At 511d-e they are νόησις, διάνοια, πίστις and εἰκασία, though just before that νόησις is called ἐπιστήμη. At 533e-534a ἐπιστήμη replaces νόησις in the top subdivision of the Line and νόησις includes the whole of the upper main division, διάνοια as well as ἐπιστήμη. It is therefore contrasted as a whole with δόξα, the one concerned with being, the other with becoming.

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mystery-religions and the Orphic writings and *teletai*. (Cf. pp. 338–40 above.) In this allegory he combines the notions of life as a prison (cf. *Phaedo* 62b) and as a cave. The former appears in Orphic tradition, as does the mire to which at 533d he compares the ignorance out of which dialectic lifts the soul. At *Phaedo* 69c to lie in mire was the fate of the uninitiated. The cave as a symbol of the sensible world in the ancient *theologoi* is discussed by Porphyry, who says that Plato (whom he quotes at some length) was anticipated by the Pythagoreans. He also quotes Empedocles, another philosopher in the Italian tradition, as calling the world (which he elsewhere describes as an alien and joyless place) a ‘roofed cave’ to which certain ‘powers’ conduct the souls. (See Porph., *Antr. Nymph.* 8.61f. Nauck; Emp. fr. 120, 118, 119; and cf. Pherecydes fr. 6.)

It looks too as if Plato’s Greece was familiar with puppet shadow-shows like the modern Turkish Karagöz playlets, reintroduced into Greece under their Turkish name. The audience does not see this Turkish Punch and his fellow-puppets directly, but only their shadows thrown on a screen (though in their case light and puppets are behind the screen, not behind the audience as in the Cave or a cinema).

Finally, some think that Plato had a real cave in mind, the cave of Vari in Attica. See now John Ferguson in *CQ* 1963, 193.

*The practical lessons* (7.519b–521b). Through all the foregoing ontological and epistemological mysteries (Plato would not reject the word), which have so fascinated and puzzled philosophers down the centuries, one is apt to lose sight of the fact that the ultimate goal, the self-authenticating source of being and knowledge, is simple Goodness (*Agathon*), the unfailingly and universally advantageous and beneficial. Plato has bestowed the status of absolute uncaused reality on the utilitarian<sup>1</sup> ideal of Socrates, who himself had an

<sup>1</sup> The use of this word in connexion with S. and P. is sometimes objected to. But P. would not have disowned Bentham’s definition of utility (‘that property in every object whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good or happiness’) as a description of the Good (except of course that ‘good’ itself must be excised). At 505a the Form of the Good is ‘that which when added to acts of justice and the rest makes them useful and beneficial’ (χρήσιμα καὶ ὠφέλιμα), and at 505e it is the aim of all action, which gives everything else its usefulness (ὄφελος).

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absolute standard in mind. It is the final conclusion of the practical calculus which Socrates asked for in the *Protagoras*, object of the knowledge which can balance the totality of pleasure and pain. But 'what art or what knowledge it is', he added then (357b), 'we shall consider some other time'. It is equally the answer to the *Charmides*, where Plato drew a marvellous picture of a technological society in which everyone would be a master of some science or profession. Medicine would keep us all healthy, navigational aids take all the risks from sea-travel, everything we used would conform to the highest technical standards, and even prophecy be developed into an infallible knowledge of the future. Would this society, run by experts and specialists, necessarily be happy? Not, says Critias, unless it also possessed the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>1</sup> And this, of course, they fail to discover.

To know what is good for anything one must first understand its nature, so to know what is good for the human race we must 'know ourselves' by understanding *human* nature (the *psyche*).<sup>2</sup> Hence, still developing Socratic ideas, Plato gave as a first step the detailed psychology of book 4, concluding with the conception of individual justice as a state of inner harmony or integrity, with physical appetites, emotions and reason working together in perfect unity and order, each having its due proportion of influence. This takes one well on the way to knowing the human good, but the supreme cosmic Good on which it depends – that 'divine and orderly', by knowing which the philosopher himself becomes divine so far as a man may – demands for its understanding an intensive intellectual programme extending over many years. It cannot therefore be explained here and now: they can only take a preliminary look at the scheme of study which will be involved. After seeing how the morality of Callicles suffered from his neglect of the importance of geometry in things human and divine (*Gorg.* 508a, p. 300 above), we shall not be surprised

<sup>1</sup> *Charm.* 173a–174b. Cf. p. 472 above.

<sup>2</sup> See vol. III, ch. XIV, 8 and 9. This is P.'s contribution to the later 'Is–Ought' controversy (p. 436 n. 1 above). Cf. Versényi, *Philosophy* 1971, 229: 'All norms for man . . . all prescriptions, commands, and oughts man is asked to obey, must be founded in human nature, the nature of the thing they are prescribed for, or else they lose either their foundation or their content. Nothing but an "is" can justify an "ought".'



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to find mathematics the subject which leads through the Forms to the Form of Good itself.

But that is looking ahead. First Plato gives the practical conclusions from his similes and allegories. Obviously no one who has seen the light will want to return to the cave, and whoever does will blunder helplessly until his eyes are used to the darkness, and if put on trial by those who know only the shadows and images of Justice will cut a ridiculous figure. (Plato never forgets.) Nevertheless government cannot be left to the others, who 'have no single aim in life to which all their actions, private and public, are directed' (519c), with the educated simply cutting themselves off from the world. The object, S. repeats, is to secure the happiness not of a single class, but of the whole community. 'Our' job as founders is to compel the best minds first to make the ascent to the highest object of knowledge *and then to return to the cave*, to help the prisoners and share their lives. They cannot object, for unlike their equals in other states they owe a debt to the city which has brought them up in the best way to combine philosophy with action. They will therefore descend again in turn. As he says later, the finished philosophers (who will already be over fifty) will be allowed to spend most of the rest of their lives in philosophy but when their turn comes will shoulder for a time the unwelcome burden of politics for the city's sake (540b). Once used to the darkness, they will see far better than the others the images and what they represent, knowing as they do the truth about justice and goodness; and the best and most peaceful state is one in which there are no struggles for power because the destined rulers, knowing a better life, have no wish to govern, but do so purely from a sense of duty, combining knowledge of good government with an indifference to politics and its rewards.

Here one feels that Plato is giving us a genuine glimpse of the ideals with which he founded the Academy. He did not believe in the establishment of an earthly city in which 'we', as founders, by a mixture of persuasion and compulsion, would ensure that philosophers would become reluctant rulers, and those in whom ambition or material appetites predominated, though without knowledge of the real good, would acquiesce in a 'right opinion' that they must stick peaceably

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to their own tasks as fighters or producers – a city moreover to be founded by banishing from an existing one everybody over the age of ten.<sup>1</sup> It would be, as S. said, none the worse, and on Plato's philosophical assumptions no less real, for remaining as an ideal paradigm of the harmony which should prevail in a city and (more important because the prerequisite) in individual characters. To ensure that at least some existing cities should be encouraged to follow these principles, he planned to educate a select few in mathematics and Platonic philosophy and send them out, not to usurp power themselves but to gain the confidence of those in power and act as their advisers. In this he was successful,<sup>2</sup> and it is not improbable that initially, inspired by Dion, he entertained some hope of doing the same himself with the younger Dionysius. But that is very different from saying that he expected Syracuse to reproduce the polity of the *Republic*.

### (II) HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE GUARDIANS (7.521C–541B)<sup>3</sup>

(a) *Mathematics (to 531 d)*. We have been told (p. 503) that the few still in the running must be capable of a stiff academic course in preparation for an approach to the Good. Since the Guardians are to be expert in war and government, S. notes first that they must choose subjects which have a practical application as well as inciting the mind to investigate the intelligible world of 'a priori necessary truths, i.e. truths that are independent of sense experience, that no experience could refute, that must hold always' (Cross and Woosley 255). Both aspects, he says, were omitted from the early literary and physical education of book 3, which aimed at forming character

<sup>1</sup> 540e–541a. This is a quick change of mind from his claim that the general public are naturally free from envy and malice and will accept the rule of the philosopher once its nature is made plain to them (499d–502c).

<sup>2</sup> For examples see p. 23 above.

<sup>3</sup> Cornford's 'Mathematics and Dialectic in *Rep.* vi–vii' (*Mind* 1932) seems to me the only exposition which makes P.'s educational programme coherent and comprehensible to a modern mind. Doubtless however it should be read with the criticisms of Murphy in *IPR* 188ff.

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rather than imparting knowledge (522a). He begins with arithmetic (counting and calculation, 522a–526c), with its obvious uses in military and other mundane spheres. These however soon fade into the background, for what interests him is obviously the unchanging and necessary character of their intrinsic subject – number. The general principle is that, to stimulate thought, a study must raise questions which sensation cannot answer. When sight says ‘This is a finger’ that settles the matter (as G. E. Moore – may one say? – repeated), but to the question ‘Is it large or small?’ it gives an ambiguous reply, e.g. it says the forefinger is both large (compared with the little) and small (compared with the middle one). Similarly touch reports the same thing to be both hard and soft, light and heavy, and these contradictions stimulate the mind to ask what these qualities are in themselves, distinguishing the separate intelligible Forms from the sensible manifestations which confuse them. The study of number passes this test, for the senses tell us the same thing is both one and many, whereas the mathematical unit is a pure unity and every unit is precisely equal to every other, and the same is true of all numbers.<sup>1</sup> Thus calculation, besides its practical utility, leads the philosophic mind on to reason about pure numbers as opposed to collections of visible and tangible objects. He adds as minor advantages that those who are good at it are in general the most intelligent and that it is good training for everybody.

When S. says that our eyes show us the same thing as both one and many, Glaucon agrees at once, so it is not further explained. For Plato it could mean made up of many constituent parts or possessing many qualities. The apparent paradox was solved by the doctrine of Forms and their participants, and later dismissed by Plato as simple or childish.<sup>2</sup> The difference between numbers and sensibles in respect of one-to-one equality is illustrated at *Phil.* 56d, where Plato distinguishes popular and philosophical arithmetic on the ground that the ordinary man operates with unequal units, e.g. cows, no two of which are exactly equal, whereas the philosophical arithmetician insists

<sup>1</sup> Every number being only a collection of units (πληθος μονάδων). See Adam *ad loc.* (11, 113).

<sup>2</sup> *Parm.* 129c, *Phil.* 14c–d, *Soph.* 251b–c.

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that every one of the thousands of units must be reckoned as equal to every other.<sup>1</sup>

This passage raises again the question of the mathematical entities intermediate between sensibles and Forms, which Plato posited as like the Forms in being eternal and changeless, but different in that there can be many of each. It seemed probable that these were not in Plato's mind as the objects of *dianoia* in the diagram of the Divided Line (p. 509 with n. 2 above), but that was because 'the triangle itself' appeared there to be a unique Form. Here it is assumed that while, like Forms, numbers are objects of thought, there are many of each. This is exactly how Aristotle described Plato's mathematics (p. 343 above). When we say  $3 + 3 = 6$  we are not speaking of the Form of three (though there *are* Forms of numbers, in which the individual numbers share),<sup>2</sup> for you cannot add a Form to itself, nor of groups of three physical objects, which may become four and in any case are never fully identical as are all instances of the number 3. With geometrical figures the point is no less obvious.<sup>3</sup>

The same principle is to be followed in the choice of the other subjects which are to be studied as branches of mathematics. They are plane and solid geometry, astronomy and harmonics. Solid geometry

<sup>1</sup> Runciman (*PLE* 125) says this is absurd, because 'it is no less true that two cows and two cows make four cows than that  $2 + 2 = 4$  or two mathematical units and two mathematical units make four mathematical units'. I find this difficult to relate to P.'s point that whereas all mathematical units are equal, one cow (unless treated as a mathematical unit, i.e. philosophically) is equal to no other cow. To put it another way, if two 1" cubes are added to two 1" cubes in the intelligible world of mathematics, the result is exactly double the original volume, but if two cows are added to two cows in the sensible world, the result is never exactly double the bulk. P.'s point, as in the *Phaedo* where he says that no two 'equal' sticks are exactly equal, is to illustrate the difference between intelligible and sensible entities.

<sup>2</sup> Ross, *PTI* ch. xii. Cf. *Phaedo* 101 b9-c9.

<sup>3</sup> In discussions of mathematical intermediates in *Rep.*, more attention has been paid to the Divided Line than to the present passage, but they have been admitted here by Adam (II, 114f. and 159f.), Wedberg (*PPM* 78f., 123f.) and Hardie (*SP* ch. 6). Robinson and Murphy do not mention this passage, but R. (*PED* 197) says that "Mathematics" are nowhere explained or named in the *Republic*, and M. thinks P. had not yet clearly formulated the doctrine of intermediates (*CQ* 1932, 100). Brentlinger (*Phron.* 1963, 149), though he finds intermediates in the Line, agrees with the odd view of Robinson that at 526a, 'while P. appears to have observed what we might call the "data" for a theory of intermediates, he simply never goes ahead and explicitly presents the theory itself'. B. is presumably paraphrasing *PED* 192, where R.'s condemnation of 'misinterpretation by inference', though clearly justified in some cases, is quite inappropriate here. When P. says that 'any "one" is equal to any other "one"', he cannot have forgotten his own basic tenet that every Form is unique. It is repeated many times in this dialogue, and cf. especially bk 10, 597c-d.

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is said to be as yet undeveloped, because it gets no official encouragement and no director of research has been found.<sup>1</sup> Astronomy comes next, described as the study of solids in motion. In spite of their beauty and regularity, the heavenly bodies still belong to the imperfect visible realm, and their movements must fall short of the precision attained in the realm of reality. The stars, then, must be treated as a geometer treats the figures he draws, sensible aids to discovery of non-sensible, mathematical truth.<sup>2</sup> Harmonics is introduced, with one of Plato's rare references to the Pythagoreans by name, as a kindred study also concerned with movements, audible instead of visible, to be pursued in the same way. The Pythagoreans seek their numbers in audible concords only, but our Guardians must go beyond them to purely mathematical problems concerning numbers themselves, asking which of them harmonize with which, and why they do so.<sup>3</sup> This, adds Plato, will be useful if employed in the search for the Good and Beautiful, but otherwise not.

(b) *Dialectic* (531 d–535 a). The final step in mathematical studies is to discover the common features of the various branches and work out their mutual relationships. In this way they will form the proper propaedeutic to dialectic, which aims directly at a knowledge of beauty and goodness, for so seen, they reveal the underlying harmony,

<sup>1</sup> 'Athens, in a word, would do well to encourage the Academy, and in Plato and his colleagues she has directors of research ready to hand.' (Cornford, *Mind* 1932, 174.)

<sup>2</sup> (a) Simplicius gives an example of this (*Cael.* 488, 21). Plato, he says, set students the problem: What uniform and regularly ordered motions must be assumed to account for [lit. 'maintain', διασώζειν] the apparent motions of the planets? The Academy's attempts to solve it may be found in Arist., *Metaph.* Λ ch. 8.

(b) The accepted opinion that P. here advocates doing away with visual observation is false. The visible stars must be used as models (χρηστέον παραδείγμασι) of reality, and for this purpose the true astronomer will fix his eye on (ἀποβλέπειν εἰς) their motions. Only after this study is it right to 'leave behind' (ἐάσομεν) these 'finest works of the Creator'.

(c) The words τὸ δὲ τάχος and ἡ οὐσα βραδυτής at 529 d do not mean that Plato is introducing motion among the Forms. Elsewhere he makes a clear distinction between a perceptible phenomenon and its οὐσία (*Crat.* 423 d and elsewhere). When in *Soph.* (248 eff.) he raises the question of whether and where there can be motion in the real world, he approaches it from quite a different angle.

<sup>3</sup> For an example of σύμφωνοι ἀριθμοί one may look at the numerical composition of the world-soul in *Timaeus*, on which see Cornford, *PC* 66 ff. For P.'s relation to the Pythagoreans in this connexion see vol. 1, 212–14, and for Pythagoras's discovery of the numerical basis of melody, and its effect on his philosophy, *ib.* 220 ff. His method, as P. complains, was empirical (p. 224).

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proportion and order of the cosmos, and to this, on the old principle that like is known by like, the soul of the philosopher is to be assimilated (6.500c-d). Mathematical order leads to the order of values, for order (*kosmos*) is itself good. The importance of mathematics to Plato as helping to answer the whole question whether there could be changeless entities at all, and so encouraging belief in the eternal order of Forms, has been pointed out on p. 251.

Glaucon is now all agog to hear dialectic as fully described as mathematics, but as with its object, the Form of the Good, we are pulled up short before the final goal. If S. tried to tell them directly what he believes to be the truth, instead of reflecting it in similes, they could no longer follow. He can only remind them that it is represented by the final stage of the ascent from cave to sunlight (p. 514 above) and call it the only study capable of defining the nature of every single thing. He does however say enough about its methods to show that it is the perfection of the familiar Socratic elenchus, whereby definitions, each an improvement on the last, are challenged and rejected until the right one is found, as with Justice in the present dialogue. We are told that it will enable the future Guardians 'to ask and answer questions in the most knowledgeable way', and that in order to isolate and define the Form of the Good they must 'as in a battle win their way through all refutations (*elenchoi*), eager in their disputes to look to reality, not opinion, as the standard'. Dialectic alone is not content with *hypotheses* (assumed and unexamined definitions), but 'doing away with them goes on until it reaches the certainty of the first principle'.<sup>1</sup>

Even in the most deeply philosophical part of the *Republic* Plato pursues the casual course of a living conversation (the ordinary meaning of *dialektikē*, pp. 57 and 248 n. 1 above), and one must read this with what he said earlier (511b-c). Socratic dialectic, practised often on young boys innocent of higher mathematics, led from particulars to Forms,<sup>2</sup> but in this higher dialectic a mind already

<sup>1</sup> 535b-e. This interpretation owes much to Cornford, *Mind* 1932, 181-3. The meaning of τὰς ὑποθέσεις ἀναιρούσα has of course been much discussed. See e.g. Cross and Woosley 246-9, Joseph, *K. and G.* 53ff. Commentators generally identify these ὑποθέσεις with the mathematician's, comparing 510c and 533c, but we are now talking about dialectic and its ὑποθέσεις, which in the context must be provisional definitions.

<sup>2</sup> It led to εἶδη, whether or not S. believed them to exist apart from their instances.

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trained in mathematics, using its *hypotheses* as such and not as first principles, deals with Forms alone, and by studying them in the same way, that is, in order to grasp their interrelations as it earlier grasped the connexions between the objects of the various branches of mathematics (themselves intelligible realities though on a lower plane), finally reaches the self-authenticating source of their existence and intelligibility: the Form of the Good. What this is S. will not say. In real life he never found it, and as for Plato, we are learning the truth of the remark in the Seventh Letter, that what he cares about most cannot be put into words. It is not revealed in the discussions themselves, but *after* them it suddenly springs up in the soul like a light kindled from a leaping flame.<sup>1</sup>

(c) *Selection and time-table (535a–541b)*. A preliminary selection of guardians was made in book 2, and of the governing class in book 3 (pp. 449 and 461 above). Now, in the light of the complete training demanded of the philosopher-rulers, their numbers are further reduced. They will, as we know, be very few, perhaps only one (502b). The additional qualifications are obvious: intellectual stamina, zest for hard study, a powerful memory and a passion for truth. First, an addition is made to the primary education of books 2 and 3, for a grounding in mathematics should be given in childhood, not however as a compulsory subject but in the form of play, for ‘compulsory learning never sticks in the mind’.<sup>2</sup> After the first stage, mental education will be suspended for two or three years of physical (‘fatigue and sleep are the enemies of study,’ 537b), lasting to the age of twenty. Those promoted at this point will devote the next ten years to developing their childhood subjects<sup>3</sup> in the synoptic, coordinating manner which makes them a fit propaedeutic to dialectic, the synoptic study *par excellence*.<sup>4</sup> At thirty, the best of this group (in war and other prescribed

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* 7.341b–d. See the discussion on pp. 46ff.

<sup>2</sup> Thus a far-reaching educational principle is introduced almost as an aside, and never developed. Elementary mathematical games are however described in *Laws* 7.819b–c. Any admiration of P.’s progressive ideas here is somewhat qualified if we look back at *Rep.* 424b–425b.

<sup>3</sup> Presumably mostly mathematical, but although all commentators assume that mathematics alone is in question, P.’s expression τὰ . . . μαθήματα πασις ἐν τῇ παιδείᾳ γινόμενα is wider.

<sup>4</sup> ὁ γὰρ συνοπτικός διαλεκτικός, ὁ δὲ μή, οὗ (537c).

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duties as well as study) proceed to five years of dialectic. Here Plato paints an alarming picture of the harm done to mind and character by the initiation into dialectic of unsuitable people and at too early an age. Brought up in certain beliefs about what is right and good and faced with the lure of bad habits, they meet men who ask them, 'But what *is* rightness?' and refute any answer they give, till they are persuaded that there is no difference between right and wrong, join the sceptics and throw discipline to the winds. It needs a mature as well as a stable mind to see through this sort of thing and get at the truth.<sup>1</sup>

The next fifteen years must be spent in the Cave, i.e. serving in military or civil posts which will give them practical experience and test their ability to withstand the distractions of office. Only then are the survivors (for there is yet a final selection at fifty) brought face to face with the Good itself, 'raising the eye of the soul to the source of all light, as a pattern for ordering their own lives and those of the state and private citizens'. From then on, as we have seen (p. 520), they will divide their time between philosophy and active government. S. ends with a reminder that some of them will be women, a repetition of his claim that the plan is not impossible, and as a brief tailpiece, the calm statement that they will initiate their new society by banishing to the country everyone over the age of ten.

### (12) THE DECLINE OF THE STATE: IMPERFECT TYPES OF SOCIETY AND INDIVIDUAL (543A-576B)

We now return, after a brief summary of all that has gone between, to the point in book 4 at which S. thought he had completed his description of the good state but was disillusioned by Polemarchus and Adeimantus (445 c, p. 479 above). The problem set was to discover the nature of justice and injustice and whether the just or the unjust man was happier. Since it had been agreed to look for them first as

<sup>1</sup> It is curious that P. should condemn outright the introduction of youth to dialectic, when he himself has given such brilliant examples of S. doing that very thing. What the earlier dialogues (esp. the *Euthyd.*) do show is that there is a right and a wrong way of doing it. Perhaps however the warning is not surprising when in his view everyone except S. (now dead) did it the wrong way.



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magnified in the state, it was necessary to examine bad states as well as the one good one, and these S. had already enumerated as four. The good state he had named aristocracy ('rule of the best') or monarchy if only one philosophic ruler was found, and the others he now, on returning to the subject, calls timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny. Each is worse than the last, and Plato represents them as a historical series of degenerations from the first, good state.<sup>1</sup> The genetic sequence is not meant to be taken literally, as is obvious from the fact that the Platonic state does not exist as a starting-point.<sup>2</sup> After each constitution he describes the kind of individual whose predominance in the state gives it its character, though as Hoerber justly remarks, 'the same stress on individuals and their characteristics permeates the discussion of the origin of each of the inferior states'.<sup>3</sup> One may quote 544d-e: 'States are formed by the characters of their citizens, which as it were tip the balance and draw the rest after them. So if there are five types of constitution there must be five psychological types among individuals.'

Even the best state cannot last for ever, for it is a universal law that everything generated must decay.<sup>4</sup> Since however its decay, like its construction, is imaginary, Plato amuses himself with a pedantic theory (probably owing much to the Pythagoreans but attributed by Plato to the Muses) of a certain 'eugenic number', arrived at by a

<sup>1</sup> The story of the different types of degenerate constitution, and the corresponding individual characters, is in its dramatic realism one of the best things P. ever wrote. It has been too much neglected in favour of the 'philosophical' central books, but some amends have been made recently by Andersson in *Polis and Psyche*, part 5. My own brief account was written before reading this book.

<sup>2</sup> It therefore does not need argument, but see Barker's remarks, *PTPA* 176-8. 'He gives a logical and *a priori* picture of the course corruption would take, supposing that we began with an ideal State, a perfect product of a perfect mind, and that the degradation of that State proceeded from within, and not from the accidents of external impulse.' But as B. goes on to say, 'if [these books] are not history, they explain history, and show *why* history is a record, not of the perfect "idea" of the State, but of its various and successive perversions'. Aristotle, like some moderns, made the mistake of criticizing the progress of decline as if it were historical, but says some interesting things nevertheless (*Pol.* 1316a1-b27).

<sup>3</sup> *Theme* 49. H. uses this as part of his general argument that P. is writing less as a political than as an ethical theorist.

<sup>4</sup> The difficulty of a perfect city decaying, that if it contains the germ of its own dissolution it is *ipso facto* imperfect, which Popper (*OS* 81) takes over from Adam, does not arise, for P. never says that if his city were realized on earth it would be perfect. A state depends on the individuals in it, P.'s is the best that can be devised for men as they are, and most men are far from perfect. (Cf. pp. 447-9 above.)

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great parade of mathematical detail, which combines in some way the minimum period of human gestation with that of a cosmic 'Great Year'. Since it determines the times when body and mind are at their best for procreation, any error about it will mean that the mating festivals are held at the wrong time and will produce less worthy offspring, with consequences already mentioned.<sup>1</sup> Iron and bronze enter the composition of men of silver and gold, bringing selfish desires for personal property. The untouched remainder are forced to assign land and houses to private owners, and gradually those whom they formerly governed as free men, their friends and supporters, are reduced to serfdom. Although Plato calls this society *timocracy*, and says that, guided by men in whom the 'spirited' element predominates, it will be above all moved by ambition to excel, he lays more emphasis on greed for money and property, the determining mark of the next (oligarchic) city to which it is the stepping-stone.<sup>2</sup> It also retains features from the first city – respect for authority, division of functions, common messes – but hesitates to put experts into office because their wisdom and single-mindedness have become adulterated. Their place is taken by simpler, soldierly types more at home in war than peace, but now with homes of their own and cherishing a furtive passion for wealth.

The predominant individual in each society, like the society itself, has his personal history as well as character. Each is represented realistically as the son of his predecessor, and if this is drama rather than philosophy it is none the worse for that. In another age Plato could have been a master of the short story. Even in summary, the history of the timocratic man may illustrate this, or at least send a

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 465f. above. Those interested in the 'nuptial number' may start with Lee's and Cornford's notes to their translations *ad loc.* and pass on to the impressive appendix of Adam, *Rep.* II, 264–312. Some further reff. are in Friedländer, *Pl.* I, 352 n. 14. (De Strycker made some additions to Diès in *REG* 1950.) Brumbaugh's conclusions are conveniently summarized by Levinson, *Defense App.* XI, 616ff. Both he and Popper (*OS* 81–3, 242–6) take Plato seriously, though differing widely in their resulting estimate of him. There is also Fride von Ehrenfels, 'Zur Deut. d. plat. "Hochzeitszahl"', *AGPh* 1962.

The passage is interesting as anticipating *Timaeus* in propounding the law γενομένων πάντ φθορά ἐστίν (cf. the address to the created gods at 41a and b), and in calling the cosmos a θεῖον γεννητόν, divine but generated.

<sup>2</sup> See esp. 548a. Rather confusingly, Gk τιμή meant material reward as well as honour, and τίμημα (about to be used at 550d11) is an assessment of property.

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reader to the original. His father is a worthy man who, living in an imperfectly run state, prefers a peaceful life to all the bother and litigation involved in seeking office and honours. The son hears his mother<sup>1</sup> complaining that her husband's lack of ambition and authority makes other women look down on her: he cares little for money and will not stand up for himself either with the neighbours or in the law-courts or Assembly, and though not actually neglectful, he is too wrapped up in his own thoughts to make much of her. He is, she says, only half a man, much too easy-going and so on 'as women do talk'. Even the servants urge the son to show more spirit than his father when he grows up, and experience confirms the lesson. The quiet-loving are despised as fools, and the busy-bodies respected. At the same time he listens to his father encouraging the element of reason in him, and is torn in two. Not naturally bad, through bad company he yields to the second of the three forces in the soul and becomes arrogant and ambitious. Though not averse to culture, he is not fully educated, a ready listener but no speaker himself. Harsh to slaves and subservient to superiors, he will base his own claims to office on achievements in war and athletics. In his youth he scorned wealth, but as he grows older will welcome it, for the lowest, avaricious part of his nature is already beginning to have an influence now that the natural safeguard against it, reason backed by education, has abdicated. It is this man, and this society, that Plato the Athenian has called the Spartan type (545 a).

*Oligarchy*<sup>2</sup> is the constitution in which power is based on a property qualification, and it arises naturally out of timocracy as the avaricious element grows stronger. Social esteem is measured by wealth, envy is rampant, and the law is twisted for the sake of gain. Rich are set against poor, and the unity of the state is lost. It cannot defend itself, for the rulers cannot fight on their own yet are afraid to arm the

<sup>1</sup> Though P. has not specifically mentioned it, it is obvious that the woman-guardian type, and the community of wives and children, would have disappeared with the introduction of personal property and houses for the ruling and military classes.

<sup>2</sup> More understandably called plutocracy by Xen., *Mem.* 4.6.12, a passage interesting as giving the Socratic basis of P.'s more idiosyncratic classification. S., says Xen., distinguished monarchy from tyranny as government by laws and with the people's consent from lawless government according to the whim of the ruler. Aristocracy is government by those who fulfil the requirements of established law and custom, plutocracy demands a property qualification, and in a democracy all are eligible.

## *The decline of the state*

people. Segregation of productive and economic activities from soldiering and government goes by the board. A man can alienate his property and live on the state as a pauper. Even when wealthy, many were mere consumers or drones of no service to the hive. An oligarchy is full of beggars and criminals. The oligarchic individual is again described in dramatic terms as the son of a timocrat ruined by society, who perhaps fell from high office, was put on trial and suffered confiscation of his goods or worse. Schooled by poverty, the son works hard for a living and gradually amasses a fortune. Reason and ambition are now entirely subordinated to avarice. He becomes mean and hypocritical, combining lip-service to honesty with secret dishonest practices.

So we come to *democracy* – as known in Plato's Athens<sup>1</sup> – after yet further reminders that the aim in describing the origin and nature of institutions is to recognize the corresponding types of men (555b and 557b). The oligarchic rulers, owing their power to wealth, do nothing to curb the prodigality of the young. On the contrary they encourage it, lending them money at high rates on the security of their property, and so finally reducing them to an embittered poverty. The rulers themselves, blinded to the dangers of the situation by their lust for wealth, grow soft in idleness and luxury, until it occurs to some of the lean, sunburnt and hungry poor that these degenerates are really at their mercy. Hence rebellion and civil war, probably with each side calling in help from other oligarchic or democratic states. If the poor win, they kill or exile their opponents and set up a democracy, with civil rights for all and everyone eligible for office, which is mostly assigned by lot. It may well seem, for a short time, the most attractive of all societies, graced as it is by every kind of character 'like a beautiful flower-patterned dress'. Its watchwords are liberty and free speech, everyone does as he likes and it becomes a kind of supermarket (παντοπωλιον) of constitutions, where each can choose his favourite.<sup>2</sup> Nobody is compelled to govern, or to obey

<sup>1</sup> For a convenient summary of its differences from modern representative democracy, see Cornford, *Rep.* 273, or Andersson, *Polis and Psyche* 180–3.

<sup>2</sup> Possible difficulties in this idea are discussed by Hoerber, *Theme* 55–7. I think P. is speaking lightly, democracy being in his eyes no genuine form of government at all. In its anarchic libertarianism, everyone can act as if he were living under whichever sort he fancies.

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those who do, to fight for his country or to keep the peace. If you want to govern or sit on a jury, nobody questions your legal right to do so. Men condemned to death or exile stay on and walk the streets as if invisible. It is all very tolerant and forgiving, and has no use for the principles we were so proud of when we claimed that naturally good men were rare and needed to be brought up from childhood in an atmosphere of beauty and right living. Anyone can rule provided he calls himself the people's friend. In sum, democracy is 'a pleasantly variegated society, impartially handing out equality of a kind to equals and unequals alike'.

What, then, of the democratic man? The mean, oligarchic type has a son, brought up to suppress all desires beyond what are necessary for life or tend to profit rather than expense. He meets some wild spirits and gets a taste of the drones' honey, pleasures and licence of every sort. For a time family influence prevails and the new 'democratic' desires are exiled, but taking advantage of his lack of culture and (like the *demos* in the state) with external aid, others spring up in greater strength and end by capturing the seat of government in his soul, deserted as it is by its proper defenders, education, good habits and reason. Shame and self-control in their turn are driven out, and he becomes a chaos of wilfulness and caprice, rushing from one craze to another: drunken parties one day and plain water the next, a spell of hard exercise, business, politics – even some dilettante philosophy. No use to tell him some pleasures are better than others: he sees no distinction. All must have equal rights and an equal chance to govern his actions, as if by lot. This life without order or discipline he calls free and happy.

A social system perishes when its own ideals are carried to excess, material profit in an oligarchy, liberty in a democracy. The popular leaders denounce as oligarchic scum any government which enforces the slightest restraint, all authority is rejected and rulers and ruled change places. This spirit invades private life. Fathers are afraid of their sons, who no longer respect them, teachers fear their pupils. The young challenge and argue with their elders, who mix with them<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Literally 'sit down with them', suggesting 'school councils' and 'participation'. The modern ring of some of the above may arouse suspicion that I have been touching up P., but this is not so. 'Oligarchic scum' translates *μαρούς τε καὶ ὀλιγαρχικούς*.

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and imitate their frivolities lest they be thought high-handed and disagreeable. And of course complete freedom and equality exist between the sexes. (Cf. p. 480 n. 1 above.) In the end citizens become so sensitive to the least suspicion of control that they flout all law and traditional moral principles. A reaction is inevitable, and the seeds of *tyranny*<sup>1</sup> are sown.

This is what happens. A democracy contains three main divisions. There is a group of idle spendthrifts, the most active and vociferous of whom sway the Assembly as demagogues while the rest noisily prevent others from speaking. Secondly there are the wealthy, who are fleeced by the first lot.<sup>2</sup> Third comes the mass of the *demos*, earning a humble living, no politicians, yet collectively, in the Assembly, the supreme power. They are kept happy by the demagogues with a share of the spoils of the rich. These if they defend themselves are branded as oligarchs and gradually forced, against their will, to become in reality reactionary plotters against the *demos*, which is injuring them more through ignorance than malice.<sup>3</sup> Thus threatened the *demos* welcomes a leader who comes forward as 'people's champion', and follows him like sheep. He soon tastes blood in the form of false accusation, trial and execution of an opponent, and as these go on his enemies in the class-war try to have him exiled or assassinated. Now comes the inevitable and decisive step into tyranny: he demands a bodyguard. This the populace willingly grant him, the 'enemies of the people' are routed, and he is sole dictator. At first he is all smiles, protests he is no tyrant, and makes some of the stock promises like cancellation of debts and redistribution of land. But this soon changes. He provokes external wars to make his leadership indispensable, keeps

<sup>1</sup> The Greek phenomenon of *tyrannis* and the *tyrannos* had by no means always the faults associated with our word 'tyranny' ('In general they [tyrants] contributed greatly to the enrichment and civilization of their States', *OCD s.v.*), and historically it was more often the bridge between oligarchy and democracy than a development of the latter (though this does not invalidate P.'s picture of the rise of the tyrant as champion of the *demos* against the oligarchs). By P.'s time however the words were already acquiring the pejorative sense in which they were applied to the bloodthirsty 'Thirty Tyrants' of 404 B.C. in Athens.

<sup>2</sup> Both sorts have money, as P. says, but by the wealthy he means the best of them (οἱ κοσμιώτατοι φύσει, 564e). He may be thinking of their personal and financial services to the state in the form of 'liturgies': choregia, trierarchy and so on.

<sup>3</sup> P. 'hates the demagogue rather than the *demos*' (Barker, *PTPA* 183). Like the shipowner in the famous simile (488a-489a), *Demos* is 'a good sort, only a bit deaf and short-sighted, and rather ignorant of his job'.

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the people poor and hard at work to prevent their plotting against him, and rids himself of any challengers by betraying them to the enemy. His popularity wanes, and among his former followers the more intelligent, courageous and independent have to be suppressed, until he has no companions but a worthless mob, who in reality hate him. His private army has to be enlarged with mercenaries and emancipated slaves, and he is reduced to the lowest shifts to pay them.

Turning to the character who in any society corresponds to the tyrant in the state, S. finds in him the very type and pattern of the Unjust Man whom he needed to set against the picture of the Just. His father had not been too bad, better than his corrupters. He had reacted with all sorts of excesses against his own father's meanness, but his heart remained divided and in his own opinion he had learned to enjoy both sorts of life, avoiding extremes of both illiberality and lawlessness.<sup>1</sup> Now he too has a son, also divided at first between boundless licence and some form of restraint. But his passions are stronger, indeed he is dominated by the lowest of them all. Here Plato further refines his division of desires (at 558d) into necessary and unnecessary. Not all of the latter are actually immoral, and though the immoral, bestial sort are present in all of us, they are normally suppressed by law, convention and our own better judgement, and reveal their existence only in dreams of incest, bestiality, murder, cannibalism and every kind of outrage. Some, however, the worst criminal types, have no inner censor, and translate these terrible dream-fantasies into reality. Such a man has a tyrant within him, and his mind gives way to the demands of lust. Having exhausted his own and his parents' resources, still driven remorselessly by his addictions, he takes to robbery and violence. A few characters of this sort in a predominantly law-abiding state may do no great harm, but in a corrupt state this is the type that rises to the top.

*Notes on the imperfect types.* The constitutions described in this section are those existing in Plato's lifetime – as seen of course through his

<sup>1</sup> P.'s summary here (572 c–d) sounds rather more favourable than the original characterization of the democratic man.

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disapproving eyes. He knew them all, and his descriptions both amplify the reasons why, as stated in the Seventh Letter (pp. 16f. above), he did not feel it possible to take part in politics himself, and go far to explain why his own constitutional proposals in the earlier books took the form they did. Whatever else they are, they are certainly a reaction against the political scene of the day. To understand his scheme of communal and individual characteristics, and perhaps forestall some inappropriate criticism, a few points may be noted.

The state reflects on a larger scale the characters of its citizens; this is the principle on which the whole discussion has rested from the beginning. But Plato is not altogether the victim of an unrealistic framework, especially when dealing with the untidiness of political life as it is. There are three constituents of the personality, three main types of character according to which of these is uppermost, and three classes in the just state so that each can have the employment to which he is naturally suited. It might have been expected that there would be three kinds of constitution, but there are five, and five types of individual to correspond. It can also be argued by tidy minds that Plato is inconsistent in his account of democracy because it means the seizure of power by the lowest, appetitive worker-class, who are by definition moved solely by bodily desires. If they want only food, drink and sex, it is illogical to suppose they could be interested in political power, ambition for which is the mark of the second, spirited class.

The first thing to notice is how the different societies and their representatives interlock, a reminder that every man contains all three psychological elements. The rulers of a timocracy are not men of spirit alone, but share a love of money with the oligarchs (548a). The timocrat's reason is fostered by his father, his ambitions and appetites by others, but the control rests with the middle, ambitious or spirited part of his nature (550b). Though we may find Plato's ideas in the *Republic* somewhat abstract, and his own scheme utopian, he certainly believed himself to be dealing with human nature and conduct. Aristotle remarked that an educated man will only demand precision to the degree that the nature of the subject permits it. 'A builder



and a geometrician do not look for the same degree of straightness in a line: the one seeks it only so far as it is useful to his work, but the other is out to discover its essence and the sort of thing it is.’<sup>1</sup> In book 8, despite his metaphysic, Plato is builder rather than mathematician, and his material – human nature – does not allow of a strict division into classes characterized by one type of behaviour only, even though this classification is the indispensable basis for the inquiry. He is not going back on what he said before. There *are* three elements in the soul, but every man possesses and exercises all three, even if one predominates. Within this framework every sort of mixture and gradation of the three main types is possible. The predominantly appetitive type is not devoid of ambition, nor does either of the lower two types lack reason, the mark that distinguishes mankind from the beasts. In the just man, as in the just State, the philosophic element is in control, and this to Plato is the ‘natural’ state of affairs.<sup>2</sup> In the just (harmonious, orderly, well proportioned) state neither spirit nor appetite seeks to govern, but when, through a failure in genetics, its fabric is loosened and its equilibrium upset, anomalies arise.

The spirited, fighting class have sterling virtues, combining courage and pugnacity with chivalry, generosity and gentleness. If they seek political power (though this can only happen when they are degenerating by failing to control the element of material greed in their souls, 548a), their action arises primarily from ambition and a desire to excel (548c). They differ from the third class in motive. These get their chance when the wealthy oligarchs become effete. What impels them to seek power is not honourable ambition but the sight of a rich prize coming within their grasp (556d),<sup>3</sup> nor do they do so until the oligarchs have thwarted their appetites by reducing them to poverty. Once in power, each one uses his new freedom to provide for his private life according to his pleasure. This, in Plato’s view, scarcely deserves the name of constitution, and to attribute this behaviour to the predominantly appetitive class would not be in-

<sup>1</sup> Ar. *EN* 1094b23–25, 1098a29–31. Cf. 1104a3.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 444b τοιούτου ὄντος φύσει, of the appetite’s subservience to the ruling element. In the same sentence P. says that it may nevertheless rebel and try to take control.

<sup>3</sup> And cf. 581d: the money-maker despises higher ambitions *unless he can make money out of them*.

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consistent. In fact however the avaricious type *par excellence* is the oligarch. The marks of democracy are liberty, variety, instability, caprice, for the majority of its citizens are internal democracies, and what that means Plato has described: the harmony of the just *psyche* is disrupted, there is no orderly precedence between its elements, and each has its fling in turn.

(13) WHICH IS HAPPIER, THE JUST OR UNJUST MAN?

(576B-592B)

At last we are ready to satisfy the original demand of Glaucon and Adeimantus which in book 2 started us off on this tremendous exercise in psychology, political theory and metaphysics. Can justice be commended not only for the external rewards which its reputation brings, in this world or another, but in its own right, as the best thing for the just man himself even if he gets nothing out of it and suffers what the world calls a terrible fate? (P. 443 above.)

The discussion which follows is unsatisfactory, said Nettleship (p. 316), because everyone is ultimately his own judge of the value of his state of consciousness and whether his own form of happiness is more worth having than another. Plato of course would not have agreed that the judgement of an ignorant man even on the question of his own happiness was worth as much as that of the philosopher, and would have claimed that by education the ignorant could be brought to see the poverty of their previous condition and how it could be enlarged and enriched. But in any case, as Nettleship goes on to say, in a case like this, where 'the arguer has practically prejudged the question before he begins his argument, its interest for us lies in observing the principle upon which he has formed his judgement, and the canons of criticism which he applies'. Plato's principle is that mental and moral health depend on a right relationship, or harmony, between the various elements in the *psyche*, so that the highest of human desires, that for philosophy, prevails, and the emotions and passions are gratified to an extent compatible with the welfare of the whole. It is not a repression of desire but a re-channelling of its

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course.<sup>1</sup> Right and wrong, justice and injustice, are not simply matters of the relationship between man and man; essentially they are inward, spiritual states of the individual, respectively a healthy and pathological state of the *psyche*. Given these premises, the arguments of a Polus or Callicles become irrelevant, and the question whether justice or injustice makes for happiness is no longer in doubt.<sup>2</sup>

*Unhappiness of the tyrannical man* (576c–580c). Taking the tyrannical man (that is, the pattern of the unjust) first, S. produces a strange argument: each type of individual resembles the corresponding constitution, a city under tyranny is enslaved and unhappy, therefore the tyrannical type of man is enslaved and unhappy. A truly Socratic paradox, which we have met before in the *Gorgias*. How can the tyrant be identified with the city that he himself holds in thrall? Is he not free to do as he likes, kill whom he will, help himself to anything that takes his fancy? (*Gorg.* 466b ff., pp. 288 f.) Then the reply was based on a distinction between ends and means, here on the doctrine of the complexity of the soul. We must be clear that a man of tyrannical character is not necessarily living in a city under tyranny, whether his own or anyone else's. The point is that he himself (his *psyche*) resembles that city. As the city is oppressed by the worst sort of ruler, the man is at the mercy of the lowest, most despicable part of himself. We remember S.'s earlier comment on the expression 'master of oneself' (430e–431a): it was *prima facie* ridiculous, since if one was one's own master one must be one's own slave, but what people meant by it was that each of us has a better and a worse side, and 'self-mastery' was the control of the worse by the better. In this sense the tyrannical man is certainly not free, being entirely, madly under the sway of his basest passions. Like the city, he is 'least able to do what he wishes' (577e, a repetition of the *Gorgias* passage), is poor (because never satisfied), and lives in constant fear. This is true if he simply lives the life of a psychopathic criminal in an orderly society, but most of all if 'he is unlucky enough to be invested by

<sup>1</sup> 6.485d; and at 586e it is said that only by following reason can the two lower elements truly enjoy *their own proper pleasures*.

<sup>2</sup> I have made this point before (p. 475), but it perhaps bears repeating.

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circumstances with supreme power' (578c). A slave-owner does not go in fear of his slaves, because society protects him. But the tyrant is as that man would be if he and his household were transported to an uninhabited region with no other free men to help him. He would soon have to curry favour with the slaves, make extravagant promises, and keep a constant watch to save his life. So a tyrant is denied the freedom of travel and other enjoyments open to his subjects. In a rhetorical conclusion S. declares the actual tyrant unsatisfied, terrified, mistrustful, envious, friendless and altogether miserable, apart from the inner thralldom to which his own unbalanced character subjects him, and which makes the tyrannical man in private life second only to the actual tyrant in wretchedness.

*The philosopher is happiest (580d–587b).*<sup>1</sup> Glaucon is now ready to agree without further ado that in the degree of happiness which they enjoy the types stand in order of their appearance – first the philosopher-king who can govern himself as well as others, then the timocratic, oligarchic, democratic and tyrannical characters – and that this order is independent of their reputation and circumstances. But for the philosopher<sup>2</sup> S. insists on providing further proofs. The first might be called the argument from inclusiveness. Ask any of the three basic psychological types which sort of life is the happiest, and

<sup>1</sup> There has been much recent discussion on the relation between justice and happiness, started by Sachs's article 'A Fallacy in P.'s *Rep.*', in *PhR* 1963, which charged S. with showing only why the Platonically just man is happy, when he had been asked to show it of the 'vulgarly' just man. Refs. for replies to Sachs will be found in Aronson, *JHPH* 1972, p. 383 n. 2 or Kraut (the latest comer to the discussion), *Exegesis* 207 n. 2. Related to this is the question whether the spirited and appetitive classes as well as the philosophers can be just. R. W. Hall in his *P. and the Individual* argues persuasively that in the Platonic city they can. They have inward justice because by consenting to the order that reigns in the state they are being ruled by their reason even without knowledge of the Forms. (See especially his pp. 171, 175, 176, 184; Kraut has argued in a similar sense, without reference to Hall, in *Exegesis* 216–22.) Almost at the same time Cross and Woosley were writing (p. 126): 'That true justice is the monopoly of philosophers may seem a surprising conclusion for Plato to reach, but it is inescapable.' In fact P. offers two levels of justice, based on the distinction between *ἐπιστήμη* and *ὁρθὴ δόξα*. On the highest level only the philosopher is just, because only he knows what justice is; but the members of the other classes can act justly through correct belief, when they are persuaded of the advantages of keeping to their proper pursuits.

<sup>2</sup> P. now calls him either 'the philosopher' or 'the king' more often than 'the just man'. 'King' stands for the best ruler (there may be only one, 502b, 540d) as 'tyrant' for the worst. His identity with the just or good man has been demonstrated over and over again.

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each will name his own. The businessman values his profits more highly than fame or honour, unless these too bring monetary reward; the chivalrously ambitious regard mere money-making as vulgar, and learning without fame as airy nonsense, whereas the philosopher finds all his pleasure in the search for truth and looks on public life and the satisfaction of material wants as regrettable necessities. How can one decide which is right? Surely the only permissible criterion is experience plus reason. Now the philosopher, like every man, has experienced the acquisitive pleasures since childhood, and like every successful man, the pleasures of respect, for honour is paid to the wise<sup>1</sup> as well as the brave and the wealthy. His experience, then, *includes* theirs and goes beyond it, whereas they know nothing of the delight experienced in the contemplation of truth. He alone therefore is in a position to compare their respective pleasures, and as for his competence to do so, judgement and reason are his own special tools in the use of which he is trained as the others are not. On both counts, therefore, only he can speak with authority on the merits of the three kinds of life (581c–583a).

Unfortunately S. adds yet another proof, lengthy, tortuous and resting on somewhat peculiar premises. Briefly, there are pleasures which fill a want and are more accurately described as relief from pain (including hunger and thirst), and others which do not follow pain nor lead to pain when they cease, e.g. the pleasure derived from a scent.<sup>2</sup> The former are not genuine pleasures but an intermediate state, and anyone who thinks them positive pleasures is like a man who is half way up an elevation, but being unable to see further, thinks he is at the top; or who, having never seen white, contrasts black with grey. Next (585b–c) comes the basic premise of Platonism that the things with which we replenish the mind, and the mind itself, are unchanging, eternal and more real than material things, together with another that, literally translated, reads: 'What is filled with what is more real, and is itself more real, is really more filled

<sup>1</sup> This may seem an odd remark in view of what S. said in bk 6 about society's treatment of philosophers, but cf. 495c–d, pp. 500f. above.

<sup>2</sup> *Phil.* 51b adds visual and aural pleasures. The most trenchant criticism of the pleasures of constant replenishment has already been made in *Gorg.* 492eff., pp. 290f. above.

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than what is filled with what is less and is itself less real' (585d).<sup>1</sup> Then we are told that to be filled with what naturally suits one is pleasant, and it follows that the satisfaction, and hence pleasure, derived from nourishing the mind is more genuine and lasting than that from nourishing the body. This judging of the reality of a pleasure by the reality or otherwise of the object which causes it is not only unsatisfactory (as Cross and Woollsey point out, p. 267), but so alien to our ways of thought as to be barely comprehensible. It is also hard to see the point of denying the name of pleasure to the feeling accompanying the satisfaction of a previous lack, on the ground that a lack implies pain and the satisfaction does no more than remove the pain, when intellectual pleasures are also expressly said to remedy a lack (585b-c, d-e), yet reach the summit of pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

These last arguments show a surprising, unnecessary and surely unfortunate development. Their validity is questionable, especially on the ground that no one can judge the reality or intensity of another's pleasures by an extraneous standard of value. The philosopher may say that he enjoys a higher quality of life than the sensualist, but he cannot say that he enjoys it more, enjoyment being solely a matter of individual preference.<sup>3</sup> And it is all totally unnecessary because, by his insistence on comparing the different lives in terms of *pleasure* (ἡδονή), S. is answering a question he was never asked. In the problem which Glaucon and Adeimantus so eloquently set him in book 2, the word 'pleasure' never once occurs. It was there suggested that the life of the unjust man is *better* (ἀμείνων, 358c, 362c), that an undeserved reputation for justice brings 'plenty of *good things*' (ἀγαθὰ, 363a and c), and that *happiness* (εὐδαιμονία) depends on appearances (365c);

<sup>1</sup> Here and at 585b9 Jowett and Cornford render πληροῦται 'is satisfied' ('filled and satisfied' Shorey, but 'fullness' Davies and Vaughan). It is better to keep to the literal sense and exclude for the present the psychological overtones of 'satisfied', because what is 'less real and filled with what is less real' can only be the body (585b1 and d5), not the ἐπιστημονικόν part of the soul, though that must be what feels the pleasure or satisfaction at the body's replenishment (τὸ πληροῦσθαι... ἡδὺ ἐστι, 585d11). Since he modified the psychology of the *Phaedo*, P. takes more care than his commentators to avoid the loose phrase 'bodily pleasures'. They are αἱ διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἐπὶ τὴν ψυχὴν τείνουσαι... ἡδοναί (584c).

<sup>2</sup> Only in *Phil.* (51e-52b) is the refinement made that though learning gives pleasure through a πλήρωσις, the corresponding lack, unlike hunger, is painless.

<sup>3</sup> See Cross and Woollsey 265f. They compare Mill, who used P.'s argument from inclusiveness, but only as a criterion of quality.

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and S. is required to show which of the two men is *happier* (361d). This word, or its Greek equivalent, is so much wider in its sweep than 'pleasure' that both Plato and Aristotle used it as the name for the all-sufficient end of human life,<sup>1</sup> whereas when asked whether he thought this supreme good was pleasure, S.'s only reply was 'Don't be blasphemous!'<sup>2</sup> Here however the climax of his reply is only to say that the tyrant's life is the most unpleasant and the philosopher's the pleasantest (ἀηδέστατα... ἡδίστα, 587b). I do not know why Plato chose to take this line,<sup>3</sup> omitting all reference to his favourite concepts of the good, the beneficial, happiness; but it looks as if the problem of the nature of pleasure was already troubling his mind and he resolved to give it an airing. Dialogue is, after all, the ideal medium for trying out new ideas. For his maturer views on pleasure we shall look to the *Philebus*, where several of the points made here are repeated and clarified.

*Tailpieces and conclusion (587b–592b).* The comparison ends with a numerical fantasy or happiness-calculus according to which the philosopher-king is 729 times happier than the tyrant,<sup>4</sup> and finally Plato supplements the argument with another of his picturesque similes. As in the *Phaedrus* the human *psyche*, that unity in variety, appeared in the form of charioteer and horses, here it is a composite creature like those of Greek mythology. (S. mentions Scylla, Cerberus and the Chimaera.) Take a beast with the heads of all sorts of animals, wild and tame, which it can grow at will, then a lion, then a man; combine them and give the result the external appearance of a man, though in fact the many-headed monster is the largest and the man the smallest. The claim of injustice is that it pays to pamper the monster and lion and starve and weaken the human being in us; our claim is that it pays to strengthen the man so that he can rear the

<sup>1</sup> *Symp.* 205a; cf. p. 507 above. For Arist. see *EN* 1176a31–2.

<sup>2</sup> 509a, and cf. the whole argument of the *Gorgias*. At *Phil.* 11d the aim of the discussion is said to be discovery of what constitutes happiness, and in the course of it some pleasures are excluded altogether, and the permitted ones relegated to the lowest place within it.

<sup>3</sup> But see Crombie's comments, *EPD* 1, 139–42.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps most clearly explained by Nettleship, p. 332. Cornford's difficulty, that 'it is not explained why 9 is to be raised to the third power' (*Rep.* p. 308), seems to be met by Benson's note in Nettleship *loc.*

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monster as a farmer his cattle, and make the lion his ally, furthering the interests of all and reconciling them with each other.<sup>1</sup> The imagery is presented with all the force of Plato's rhetorical skill, but tells us nothing new. It was all in book 4 except the identification of the best in human nature with the divine,<sup>2</sup> and that we learned from the *Phaedo*.

The purpose (concludes S.) with which we founded our society was to ensure that the same authority should govern the worst as the best. That is why the best man was to govern, being himself governed by the divine element within; not to the detriment of the others but because it is best for all alike to be controlled by divine wisdom – best of all if the control comes from within, but if not, then from without, 'that we may all be so far as possible equals and friends'.

A man of sense will devote his life to fostering the right relationships within himself. Health, wealth and honours he will judge by their effect on the polity within him, lest excessive attention to any should distort its harmony. 'Then he will not enter politics?' asked Glaucon. 'Not in his own city perhaps, but he will in the city to which he properly belongs.' 'You mean the one we have founded in the realm of talk, for I don't suppose it exists anywhere on earth.' 'Well, perhaps it is laid up in the skies (*ouranos*) as a pattern for anyone who likes to see, and seeing it, to found it in himself. Whether it exists or ever will exist anywhere makes no difference: it is the only one in whose affairs he can take part.'

So ends the saga of the Just State. The word *ouranos*, commonly translated 'heaven', has not, as Cornford noted, the associations of the Christian Heaven, yet it is more than 'the visible order of the universe'. It was its traditional role as the home of the gods that gave point to such metaphorical uses as the location of the (non-spatial) Forms 'beyond the heavens' (cf. pp. 402f., 432f. above) and the description of man, in virtue of the immortal part of the soul, as 'a creature not earthly but heavenly' (*Tim.* 90a). At the same time, it certainly included the visible cosmos. For Plato as for Addison, 'the spacious firmament

<sup>1</sup> To complete the picture it must be added that P. includes manual labour as possibly (in his favour we may note the  $\delta\tau\alpha\nu$ ) tending to foster the growth of the monster (590c). Cf. 3.395b–c, and for the Socratic origins of this attitude see vol. III, 410f.

<sup>2</sup> 589d1, e4, 590d4. Cf. *Phaedo* 80a.



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on high' and 'all the planets in their turn', by their order and beauty (τάξις and κόσμος) proclaimed the world to be the work of a divine Mind. That is the chief lesson of the *Timaeus*, and here in book 7 (530a) the heavenly bodies are 'the finest works of the Creator'. That passage is a reminder that although no visible objects or their motions can be perfect, their study is part of the education by which the mind of the philosopher rises to the eternal and perfect realities 'by the contemplation of which he himself becomes divine and orderly so far as a man may' (500c). These are the Forms, marshalled under the supremacy of the Form of the Good. The just city that Plato has described is not a Form, but like the stars, the best of its kind that could ever be realized in its own material: that compound of beast and god which is human nature.

### NOTE ON BOOKS 9 AND 10

The latter part of book 9 tries a reader's patience severely. The characterization of the successively deteriorating types of society and individual has been a masterpiece of realism in which every age – certainly the present one – must recognize its own traits; but the rest drags on unnecessarily, repeating in different ways what has been said before, and some of its arguments lack relevance as well as cogency. This in turn is redeemed by the moving simplicity and directness of the close, which to a modern reader may well appear the perfect ending for the whole work. The resumption of the attack on art with which book 10 begins seems ill timed, and is commonly referred to as a sort of appendix (Crombie calls it a coda), and the second part of the book, on the rewards of virtue, is introduced abruptly and, it is said, shows signs of having been left in an unfinished state.<sup>1</sup> However, the two parts are not on a level. The first may well seem self-contained and out of context: Plato himself had good philosophical reasons for putting it so late,<sup>2</sup> but perhaps his philosophical and literary aims were for once at odds. But to crown his argument by a great *mythos*, in which *nous* takes wings and soars beyond the confines of *logos* into the regions of religious faith – to complete his exposition of the true nature of the righteous and the unrighteous man by a revelation of the destiny awaiting each – that, it

<sup>1</sup> Nettleship 355.

<sup>2</sup> At the end of his first criticism of poetry in bk 3 (392c) he says that we cannot confirm its harmful effects on human character and life until we have decided the main question of the true nature and effects of justice and injustice; and here at 595a he notes that the need to exclude mimetic poetry from the city is clearer now that the different forms of soul have been distinguished.

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cannot be doubted, was his intention from the beginning. It is the indispensable climax, nor do its final words form a less fitting peroration to the whole than those of book 9.

### (14) THE FEUD BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND POETRY (10.595A-608B)<sup>1</sup>

'Great, Glaucon, is the decision, bigger than we think, between becoming a good man and a bad; so that neither honour nor wealth nor political power – *no nor even poetry* – should excite us into neglecting justice and goodness as a whole.' (608b)

#### (a) *Argument from degrees of reality* (595a-602b)

Plato confines his attack to what he calls mimetic poetry, not here confined to drama but including epic and even lyric (607a). In fact he is not using the epithet in quite the same sense here as in book 3. There it referred to the formal difference between dramatic and narrative verse (p. 452 above). Here it includes all poetry which represents or describes actions and events in the natural world.<sup>2</sup> There his main objection was that our characters become assimilated to what we act or enjoy seeing and hearing acted, and the themes of poetry were unworthy. Here he starts with a more philosophical objection based on the doctrine of Forms, which recognizes three ontological grades: a Form, its imperfect copies in the physical world, and an artist's copies or representations of these. Craftsmen make many beds, but each is an attempt to achieve the same single purpose, that is, in Plato's terms, to reproduce in matter the perfect Form of Bed.<sup>3</sup> Beds come in all shapes, sizes and degrees of comfort, they are made and fall to pieces, typical denizens of the world of becoming, not wholly real. Thirdly, an artist may paint a picture of a bed,

<sup>1</sup> 'Let us add, to avoid the charge of insensitiveness and philistinism, that there is an ancient feud between philosophy and poetry' (607b).

<sup>2</sup> For the controversy over whether P. here misrepresents what he said in bk 3, see Tate in *CQ* 1928, Cross and Woosley 277-81. On the whole question of P.'s treatment of poetry in *Rep.* add Tate's second article (*CQ* 1932) and Grube, *PT* 182-94.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Crat.* 389a, where the Form of a weaver's shuttle is described as 'that which is fitted by nature to do a shuttle's work', and it is said that when a broken shuttle is to be replaced, it is not the broken one, but this Form, that the maker will look to as model.

reproducing only its appearance as seen from one angle. No one would call it a real bed, nor is the bedstead of wood or iron real in comparison with the Form.<sup>1</sup> The imitative poet is similarly a maker of representations, at two removes from reality.

Now an artist could realistically depict, say, a shoemaker at work without any understanding of his craft, and this is all that poets do, though their admirers foolishly suppose that because they depict the work of craftsmen, generals, priests, and men behaving well or ill, they must themselves be skilled craftsmen and strategists and authorities on religion and morality.<sup>2</sup> If Homer and Hesiod could command all this knowledge, they would hardly have remained wandering minstrels, but attained honourable positions as legislators, reformers, strategists, founders of a way of life like Pythagoras or leaders of practical thought like the Sophists.

Again, take the three procedures of use, manufacture and representation. The artist copies the look of, say, a bit and bridle without understanding the secrets of making or using them. The harness-maker has a 'right belief' about how to make them because instructed by the horseman. Only he, the user, *knows* when they are right for their purpose. And (the old Socratic dictum, p. 186 above) the excellence and beauty of everything – implement, living creature or action – consists in its fitness to perform its proper function. Reading this in the light of the earlier books, we see that in his limited sphere the user of an implement is an analogue of the philosopher-king. He has direct experience of what is good and bad about a tool (601d) and hence of what would be the perfect tool, because he knows what it is meant to do. The maker has a correct belief about the best way to fashion his materials, as the second category of guardians were educated by the philosophers to a correct belief in matters of law and

<sup>1</sup> With further reference to the discussion on pp. 494ff., there can, I think, be no doubt that Plato saw no difference between two senses of 'to be real': to be a real (ἀληθής 596e) bed, and to be real as opposed to non-existent or semi-existent. Unfortunately his own words are practically untranslatable into any modern idiom. 597a, rendered as literally as possible, runs: 'Did you not say just now that the bed-maker does not make the Form, which we claim is the essential bed (ὁ δὲ θεὸς φασιν εἶναι ὃ ἐστὶ κλίνη), but a sort of bed?' 'Yes.' 'Then if he does not make what it is, he does not make what *is*, but something resembling what is. If anyone were to say that the work of a cabinet-maker or any other craftsman is completely *being* (ὅν), he would not be speaking the truth.' The spirit of Parmenides was indeed difficult to exorcise.

<sup>2</sup> This of course was true. Cf. *Ion* 537a ff. and pp. 203–9 above.

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morality. The imitator knows nothing of the real goodness or badness of what he depicts, but writes as an ignoramus for an audience equally ignorant.

Most extant poetry, then, would not be allowed in the Platonic state. As Grube pointed out, this is not surprising, for neither would existing statesmen or orators. But just as there is true statesmanship and rhetoric, so there is a true poetry, and the criterion for both is the same: they must spring from knowledge of the *essence* of their subject, the *truth* about their theme (p. 414 above). Then the *mimesis*, unlike that current in Greece, will reflect reality directly, as philosophic *mimesis* does (500e), not at two removes. Tate (*CQ* 1932, 163f.) drew attention to the explicit distinction made in the *Sophist* (267b-d) between *mimesis* with and without knowledge, with particular reference to morality. 'Many, having no knowledge of Justice but a sort of belief (*doxa*), try hard to make it appear that they have in themselves what they believe in...by imitating it in deed and word... We must therefore distinguish the imitator who has knowledge from the one who has not.' Plato invents a name, 'doxomimic', for the ignorant imitator.

So the true poet turns into the philosopher, as one would expect,<sup>1</sup> and before criticizing Plato's attitude to art one must be sure what one is criticizing. It is not a contemptible theory that a poem about a lover should convey not so much an individual and temporal experience as the essence of what it is to love, or a landscape give less a topographical record than a glimpse, through the medium of nature, of the artist's vision of something eternal and divine. Perhaps it is a disappointment when we come to actual examples and learn that the only forms of poetry which Plato would allow are hymns to the gods and eulogies of good men, but at least this is not open to the logical objection sometimes brought against it. It is said that such works, since they must recount the deeds of their gods and heroes, will be as mimetic as the forbidden genres, but this is not so. They

<sup>1</sup> At 597e7 the mimetic poet (tragedian) is contrasted with the *king*, who sees the truth. To follow up these comments see Friedländer, *Pl.* 1, 119 with notes, Wilamowitz, *Pl.* 1, 479, Dodds, *Gorg.* 322, Flashar, *Ion* 107. Collingwood's attribution to P. of a complete 'philosophy of art' (*Mind* 1925) is generally rejected.

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will not simply reproduce erroneous *beliefs* about them (such as are extensively documented in bks 2 and 3), but being composed with *knowledge* will tell the truth.

Oddly enough the clearest statement of Plato's point here was made by Aristotle in the days when he was still a Platonist. In the following fragment of his *Protrepticus* it is both easy and legitimate to adapt what it says about the philosopher-statesman to the poet who is not (in the pejorative sense used by Plato here) mimetic. Aristotle is arguing that theoretical wisdom is also of the greatest benefit in practical life:<sup>1</sup>

Other arts take their instruments and their most accurate reasoning not from the primary realities themselves, with a rough approximation to knowledge, but at second or third hand or even further off, basing their arguments on experience. Only the philosopher copies direct from realities,<sup>2</sup> for it is realities that he sees, not imitations. . . If a man models his legislation and actions on other human laws and actions – of Sparta or Crete or anywhere else – he is not a good or serious legislator. An imitation of something not good cannot be good, nor an imitation of what is not divine and lasting be immortal. Only the philosopher's laws are firmly based and only his actions right and good, for he alone models his life on reality and the divine.

*The three beds and the doctrine of Forms. (i) Scope of the doctrine.*<sup>3</sup> An attractive trait of Plato's Socrates (and no doubt of the real one), on which Adeimantus teased him at 487e, is his fondness for concrete illustration and imagery. Nor is it fair, when he introduces something *as* an illustration, with his eye on something else (here the shortcomings of the mimetic poet), to press him on every detail. The beds make Plato's three-tiered ontology absolutely clear: the ideal (that is, real) bed made by God, the material bed made by the carpenter, and the picture of it made by the painter. That is all they are intended

<sup>1</sup> Arist. *ap. Iambl. Protr.* ch. 10, p. 55 Pistelli; fr. 13 Ross. This union of the theoretical and the practical had to be abandoned with the belief in transcendent moral Forms. Cf. the reff. to *EN* on p. 536 above. The time has not yet come to argue against those who deny his Platonism in *Protr.*

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Plato, *Pol.* 300c: written laws based on knowledge are μιμήματα τῆς ἀληθείας.

<sup>3</sup> See further Ross, *PTI* ch. xi and the work of Robin and Cherniss to which he refers.

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to do,<sup>1</sup> and we should not on the strength of this passage alone decide that Plato believed in transcendent Forms of manufactured objects. For instance, one thing certain about the Forms is that nobody – God or man – made them, for they are eternal and uncreated. In the cosmogony of the *Timaeus* they are there to serve as model for the divine Creator in designing the cosmos. Nor is the craftsman a philosopher to work with direct knowledge of the Forms.<sup>2</sup> He has ‘right belief’ (602a).

What the passage does re-emphasize is that form (and this applies to the immanent forms of Aristotle as much as the separate Forms of Plato<sup>3</sup>) is a teleological concept. The carpenter, though not a philosopher with *knowledge* of the Forms, has an inkling of what a perfect bed would be like because he knows what a bed is *for*. If he could, he would make one as perfectly adapted for rest and slumber as the advertisers claim,<sup>4</sup> and the purpose so manifest in artefacts must have strongly inclined Plato to hypostatize it as a Form. The fact that the concepts of form and teleology are indissoluble has led to the remark that S. was right when in the *Parmenides* he rejected forms of hair, mud (or clay) and dirt. This is an interesting little point. Does hair serve no purpose, or mud and clay with which bricks are made and in which cattle cool themselves? Conversely, does Triangularity (an undoubted Form) represent a purpose? Not to our way of thinking, perhaps, but to Plato’s, yes; in the sense, that is, that it or any other

<sup>1</sup> A point made by Proclus, in *Tim.* 104F (1, 344 Diehl). Adam (11, 387) disagreed.

<sup>2</sup> Whether P. believed in Forms of artefacts is disputed, and their existence seems to have been debated in the Academy. Aristotle refers to it several times, but as Cherniss says (*ACPA* 241, where he collects the testimonies), Plato’s extant writings provide no definite and unambiguous evidence on the point. At *Laws* 965b–c he says the best craftsman will look beyond τὰ πολλὰ to τὸ ἓν and πρὸς μίαν ἰδέαν. Here again however he is only illustrating the point that the Guardians must proceed like this with the moral Forms, or virtues. The one place where σκευαστά are unmistakably included among particulars of which there are Forms is *Ep.* 7.342d, on which see Bluck’s note. On the other hand the imagery of the Cave in bk 7 suggests that σκευαστά are on a lower plane of reality than φυτευτά. See Adam on 514b and 532b–c. That P. found it difficult to decide the point is not surprising, and the relation between nature and art as he saw it late in life in *Laws* 10 (where both are the product of νοῦς) would tend to bring them together. When, in *Parm.* (130b–d), the whole question of the extent of the world of Forms is raised, artefacts are not mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> And because teleology is more obviously present in art than nature, Ar. frequently uses τέχνη as an analogy, a procedure which he justifies in *Phys.* 2 ch. 8 on the ground that nature fulfils purposes no less.

<sup>4</sup> Actually the κλινᾶι which P. associates with τράπεζαι at 596b, though always translated ‘beds’, are pretty certainly couches for reclining on at meals (cf. Ar. *Ach.* 1090). But no matter.

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Form is the perfection towards which the particular instances are 'striving'.<sup>1</sup>

On the extent of the world of Forms there is what appears to be an important pronouncement at 596a: 'I believe we usually assume a single Form for every group to which we apply the same name.' As it stands, this would make the existence of an eternal Form dependent on arbitrary linguistic usage, which is Platonically nonsense. For Plato the kinds or classes (*eidē*) into which particulars fall are objectively determined by their natures (*eidē* or *physeis*), and it is to them that the eternal Forms (also *eidē*) correspond. Things take their names from the Forms in which they participate (*Phaedo* 102b). The expression here is very natural, but in the light of other passages must be read as referring to particulars which are *rightly* grouped under the same universal name. 'We' are Plato and his friends. At *Phdr.* 265 e (p. 428 above) he insists that class-divisions must be made 'at the natural joints', and at *Pol.* 262 a-e he deprecates splitting off a part of a genus which has not a true *eidos*. As examples he cites first the Greek habit of dividing mankind into Greeks and foreigners, though the latter term includes a great many peoples unrelated by language or anything else, and secondly number. Anyone could arbitrarily separate the number 10,000 from all the rest, give the rest a name and call it collectively a single class just *because* it now has a name. Odd and even on the other hand are genuine definable species (*eidē*) of the genus number.<sup>2</sup> In the *Cratylus* (387b-d) S. admonishes Hermogenes that 'if a man speaks as things are intended by nature to be spoken of, and with the appropriate instrument [*sc.* name], his action – that is, his speech – will accomplish something. Otherwise he will be in error and his action nullified.' The purpose of names is to classify according to essence (388b-c), and this will not be achieved

<sup>1</sup> βούλεται εἶναι *Phaedo* 74d, ὀρέγεται 75a, προθυμείται 75c. I cannot trace where I read the remark about S. in *Parm.*

<sup>2</sup> If P. did say that there are Forms of natural objects only (ὅποσα φύσει, Arist. *Metaph.* 1070a18, on which see Bluck, *CR* 1947, 75f.), he may well have been using φύσει in the sense of ἣ πέφυκεν at *Phdr.* 265e. So Ross, *PTI* 174. At 1078b30-4 Ar. says that by hypostatizing the universal classes or forms for which Socrates had sought definitions, it 'happened to the Platonists (συνέβαινεν αὐτοῖς), as it were (σχεδόν) by the same argument, that there were Forms of everything spoken of universally.' I take this to mean that they were logically committed to this position, not that they consciously held it.

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unless everything referred to by a common name has the same *eidos*.

(ii) *The uniqueness of a Form*. At 597c–d S. says that God, wishing to be a real maker of a real bed, made only one, because if he made a second, another would appear whose form both the first two possessed, and the new one would be the essential Bed, or ‘what a bed is’. (The personification here wears thin, for the unique Form or essential Bed would ‘appear’ or ‘pop up’ (ἀναφανείν) without any doing or willing on God’s part.) I confess that I cannot see any trace here of a distinction in Plato’s mind between *being* and *having* a Form,<sup>1</sup> in the sense that the Form does not possess (is not characterized by) the character of the particulars which, in his language, share in it. On the contrary, it manifests it to perfection, it ‘is’ what they ‘become’. How, otherwise, could particulars be said to imitate Forms, or Forms be patterns and models (παράδειγματα)? Chiefly, however, it is a question of the plain meaning of Greek. The ‘shape’ or ‘form’ (*idea, eidōs*) of a bed can hardly fail to be bedlike, nor can ‘that which is a bed’ (597a2, c9) and ‘the bed which exists in nature’ (or ‘reality’, 597b5–6) fail to have the qualities of a bed.<sup>2</sup> Of course the whole idea of an eternal, invisible but intelligible bed sounds absurd. One can sympathize with the fallacy that Justice (or ‘the Just’) is just (p. 223 above), but it can hardly be translated into terms of ‘Bedness’, for which we have not even the word. We come back to the point that it is in this context only an illustration. Whatever he thought about Forms of artefacts, what Plato is after is the imitation of ‘human affairs with reference to virtue and vice, and divinity’ (598e). It is the moral Forms that matter.

The present passage is sometimes brought into connexion with the so-called (since Aristotle) ‘Third Man’ argument in the *Parmenides*.

<sup>1</sup> So strongly argued by Cherniss in *AJP* 1957, 259f., supported by Strang, *Plato* 1 (ed. Vlastos), 192f. Contrast Wedberg, *ib.* 41 n. 18, and on self-predication of Forms see also pp. 119, 223f. above. Crombie (*EPD* II, 268) sees the point here as logical: S. is saying, ‘in a somewhat clumsy way’, that the Form is a universal. There can be more than one instance, but it is logically impossible that their common nature should be more than one. This is helpful, but if P. could have accepted such a reduction in status for those separate, perfect and changeless Beings, he would have avoided many of the difficulties into which the doctrine brought him.

<sup>2</sup> What in any case could be made of the words ἡς...τὸ εἶδος at 597c8? Surely that the ultimate Form *has* a form, the opposite of the conclusion of Cherniss and Strang.



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There are in fact three somewhat similar arguments, and a comparison may help to elucidate them.

1. *Tim.* 31a4. The Form of a genus (in this case 'animal') must contain all the Forms of the species subsumed under it. If there were two of them, each would contain some only of the relevant species, and there would have to be a more all-embracing Form containing both of these with the species which each embraces. They would be like the Forms of vertebrates and invertebrates, each containing a large number of species of animal but not all.

2. *Rep.* 597c. This refers to a specific Form not further subdivided. All instances of a Form owe their character to participation in the perfect Form itself, e.g. beds to their participation in the Form of Bed. There cannot be two of these Forms, because they in their turn could only share the same character by participating in the nature of a higher, single Form. The unexpressed belief behind this in Plato's mind is (I suggest) this: plurality is necessarily connected with difference, and that in its turn with the imperfection inseparable from realization in a physical medium. If we imagine a perfect, non-material Form, it must be unique, for what could differentiate one Form from another identical in *eidos*?

3. *Parm.* 132d5 (the 'Third Man'). Resemblance is a reciprocal relationship. If particulars resemble their Form, the Form must resemble the particulars. But it is claimed that things which resemble each other do so by virtue of sharing in the same Form. Hence there must be a higher Form (2) in which both the particulars and Form (1) will share. But Form (2) will also resemble its instances, and so on *ad infinitum*.

Arguments (1) and (2) are arguments for the uniqueness of a Form. Argument (3) is introduced as an objection to the doctrine of Forms itself. If, as some think, the *Republic* passage is open to that refutation, this had not yet occurred to Plato. As the earlier books have shown, the Forms are still in part a religious conception. They are divine, and apprehended, after suitable preparation, by faith or intuition (*νόησις*). They are still, as in the *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, the *epopteia*, the revelation vouchsafed to initiates in the intellectual mysteries of Platonism.

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### *(b) Psychological and moral objections to poetry (602c–606d)*

The possible implications of Plato's tale of the Three Beds have led us away from his real subject, the criticism of mimetic poetry. His second set of arguments against it need not detain us long, being largely a development of the moral objections raised in book 3. Appearances often contradict what our reason tells us is true, as when a straight stick looks bent in water or distance deceives over the size of an object. Mimetic art, as we have seen, presents only appearance uncorrected by anything like a science of measurement, so it cannot speak to our reason but only (according to the psychology of book 4) to a lower element in us. This is borne out by the fact that poets, especially dramatists, depict the more violent emotions rather than the calm working of reason – they are, after all, much easier to represent as well as more popular – whereas it has been agreed in book 3 (p. 452; Plato refers to it at 603e) that a good man, however great his suffering, will keep his emotions under strict control. Given our tripartite nature, there is always the possibility of internal conflict, and this sort of poet encourages it. It is fair, then, to class him with the painter in all respects: his works are images far removed from truth, and they arouse and strengthen the foolish part of the *psyche* – that which confuses large with small – at the expense of the reason. Worse still, such poetry can corrupt the very best natures, for even the best of us enjoy seeing tragic behaviour and praise as a great poet the one who can affect our passions most strongly. We excuse ourselves by saying that the sufferings are not our own, and there is no harm in pitying a good man even if he overdoes his grief. But the same applies to laughter, sex, anger. *Mimesis* relaxes the control over all these which makes us better and happier men.

### *(c) Conclusion: poetry to be given every chance (606e–608b)*

Thus reason compels us to banish poetry from our city. Yet we ourselves are so susceptible to her charm that if she can uphold her right to a place in a well-governed society we shall be delighted to hear her do so in any metre she chooses; or if her admirers can show in prose that she brings not only pleasure but benefit to men and

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societies, we shall all be in their debt. If not, we must renounce our love and repeat as a counter-charm our conviction that she is a stranger to the truth and endangers the balance of that polity which each man carries within himself.

### (15) WE ARE PLANNING FOR THE WHOLE OF TIME (608C-621D)<sup>1</sup>

#### (a) *The soul is immortal* (608c-611b)

In the choice between justice and injustice, more is at stake than we might think. It will affect us not only during the little span of human life but through the whole of time (as at *Phaedo* 107c), for the soul is immortal and never perishes. Glaucon is astonished, for as Cebes said in the *Phaedo* (70a), the soul's survival after death is a matter of 'widespread incredulity'. It was not of course a novel idea. The possibility of a blessed immortality was familiar from the Eleusinian mysteries, an Athenian national cult, as well as the more esoteric *Orphica*, and Glaucon's astonishment was rather that of an enlightened aristocrat at hearing it stated not as the climax of a moving and sometimes terrifying ritual<sup>2</sup> but as a plain matter of fact acceptable to reason.<sup>3</sup> S. must therefore defend his statement, and does so by the argument from 'specific evils'. 'Evil' may be equated with 'destructive', 'good' with 'preservative and beneficial'. For everything there is a specific evil, which impairs and finally destroys it; and a thing can only be destroyed by the evil natural to it, as eyes by ophthalmia (and more generally the body by disease), crops by blight, timber by rot, metals by rust and so on. If there is anything whose specific evil, though it may harm, cannot destroy it, it must be indestructible. The soul has its own specific evil, namely wickedness,

<sup>1</sup> It is an interesting sidelight on the difference in outlook between P. and his modern interpreters that Murphy does not think this section even worth mention, and Cross and Woollsey dismiss the myth in a final half-page. In both commentaries the chapter on P.'s criticism of poetry and art is the last.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the description in Plut. *De an.*, fr. 178 Sandbach (Loeb ed.).

<sup>3</sup> So Adam, *Rep.* II, 421. Both here and in *Phaedo* it seems that S.'s friends can accept the doctrine of Forms without hesitation or argument (*Rep.* 507b, *Phaedo* 100b-c) yet be ignorant of its corollaries regarding *anamnesis* and immortality.

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which though it depraves cannot destroy it.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the soul is indestructible, though the body is destroyed (at death) by its natural evils, disease or injury. As an addendum he repeats the point made in the *Phaedo* that the number of souls in existence remains constant.<sup>2</sup>

The current concept of the *psyche* was complex and confused, and badly in need of analysis,<sup>3</sup> a state of things of which Plato appears to take advantage. As a follower of Socrates, he was inclined to equate it with the mind, also called the true self, the master which uses the body as its instrument. Then his doctrine of *eros*, and of the philosopher as literally a *lover* of wisdom, brought in the element of desire which could be directed at higher or lower objects, uniting the moral with the cognitive aspect. Apart from this he believed in the *psyche* as that which imparts life (i.e. the power of motion, pp. 419–21 above), in which aspect ‘to love one’s *psyche*’ could mean to be afraid of death, the very opposite of what ‘care for the *psyche*’ meant for Socrates. To achieve his present end, he plays on the identity of this life-force (which of course men share with animals and plants) with the seat of the moral sense in human beings. He genuinely believed in this identity,<sup>4</sup> but nowhere else does he attempt to argue in precisely this way that the *psyche* must survive bodily death because it cannot be destroyed by wickedness.<sup>5</sup>

This is certainly no improvement on the arguments for immortality in *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, and for Plato’s sake one would hope that it was not very seriously meant. Adam remarked on the light-hearted way in which it is introduced (608d): ‘Haven’t you noticed (οὐκ ἤσθησαι) that the soul is immortal?’ ‘Good Lord no. Can you really maintain that?’ ‘Of course. So can you. There’s nothing difficult about it.’ Unless I have misunderstood it,<sup>6</sup> the illogicality of the argument, apart from its astonishing premises, is patent. It requires

<sup>1</sup> That δδίκη is ψυχῆς κακία was said already in bk 1, 353e.

<sup>2</sup> Introduced abruptly in a single sentence, which Nettleship regarded as evidence that bk 10 was left in an unfinished state.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the account of it in vol. III, 467–70.

<sup>4</sup> For the teleological conception of motion in *Phdr.* see p. 420.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. however the argument in *Phaedo* (92c–94b) that the *psyche* cannot be a ‘harmony’ because if it were, all souls would be equally good (p. 347 above).

<sup>6</sup> Adam (II, 425) says: ‘We are surely not justified in charging Plato . . . with confounding . . . the two notions of physical death and death of the soul.’

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that soul and body should be sharply separated, and that death as ordinarily understood – caused by disease, injury or the like – affects the body only. ('Even if the body were chopped into little bits, soul would not perish any more for that', 610b.) Yet the argument is that because wickedness does not cause death it cannot destroy the soul. (This is especially apparent from the manner of Glaucon's agreement at 610d–e.) It is assumed, then, that if physical death were caused by wickedness, wickedness could destroy the soul, whereas it is also part of the argument that physical death, as the specific evil of the body, can destroy that and nothing else. How do we know that wickedness, the specific evil of the soul, cannot destroy it, when destruction of soul is something different from ordinary death?

### (b) *The soul not composite* (611b–612a)<sup>1</sup>

The soul being immortal, S. continues, it is necessary to guard against a possible misunderstanding of what has gone before, for nothing composite can well be immortal.<sup>2</sup> He has described the forms it takes and the experiences it undergoes in this life, when marred by its association with the body<sup>3</sup> – rather like the sea-monster Glaucus, whose pristine nature can hardly be seen through the damage inflicted by the waves and the shells, weed and rocks which cling to him (611c–d). But if we would see it in its original purity, we must strip all this off and look solely at its love of wisdom,<sup>4</sup> its longing to consort with changeless, divine Being, to which it is akin. Only thus can we understand whether its true nature is simple or composite, and what it really is.

So Plato confirms explicitly that the pure and immortal soul is still the philosophical part alone – not simply reason, but *eros* totally absorbed in the quest for truth (pp. 475 f. above) – as it was in the *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*. Physical desires and worldly ambitions are, as is only reasonable, properties that develop in conjunction with the

<sup>1</sup> See also pp. 476–8 above.

<sup>2</sup> A point made at *Phaedo* 78c and *Tim.* 41b (τὸ . . . θεὸν πᾶν λυτὸν), and connected with γενομένης παντὶ φθορά (*Rep.* 8.546a). Anything with parts must be a γιγνόμενον because the parts are prior to the whole.

<sup>3</sup> So also in *Gorg.* 524e–525a.

<sup>4</sup> φιλοσοφία. τὸ φιλόσοφον is the highest of the three parts of the (incarnate) soul at 411e. The affinity of the soul to the world of changeless Being is a reminder of *Phaedo* 79d.

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body, though they may outlast this life, for no soul, save that of the rare philosopher,<sup>1</sup> is purified immediately.

### (c) *Everyone gets his deserts in life or after death: the pilgrimage of souls*

S. now claims that he has fulfilled his promise by demonstrating that to follow justice is best for a man (that is, his *psyche*) irrespective of external reputation or reward. He is now entitled to express his own belief that, first, a man's justice is always known to the gods, who will not neglect his welfare. If he is unfortunate on earth, it must be for his ultimate good, perhaps a salutary penance for sins committed in a previous life. Rather surprisingly he adds that in general justice is appreciated by men too. The unjust may prosper for a time, but usually get found out and end their days in misery and humiliation. All this however is nothing compared to what awaits the just and the unjust after death, and the end of the *Republic*, as of *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus*, is a grand apocalypse relating the soul and its fate to the structure and processes of the whole cosmic order.

It is the tale of Er,<sup>2</sup> son of Armenius, a Pamphylian. He was killed in battle, but his body did not decompose and twelve days later he returned to life and recounted his experiences. His story is woven of two strands, the purely mythical or eschatological and the cosmological. The first, though enriched with fresh details from Plato's inexhaustible imagination, shares its main features with the other great myths, drawn from a common stock of religious, and particularly Orphic lore.<sup>3</sup> Though the scenery is altered in picturesque ways, we meet again the place of judgement in a meadow, the upward and downward roads, the chasm of Tartarus, reincarnation in animal as well as human form, cycles of a thousand years, the distinction

<sup>1</sup> For the soul of the philosopher see *Phaedo* 80d-e, and on this doctrine in general cf. p. 423 above.

<sup>2</sup> The name has been compared with Iranian Arā son of Aram, but its occurrence at Luke iii. 28 suggests Semitic origin. I shall not in this work go into the large question of possible oriental influences on P.'s thought. Among the many studies a reader may be referred to Kerschensteiner, *P. und der Orient* (1945), Koster, *Mythe de P., de Zarathoustra etc.* (1951), Dodds in *JHS* 1945, Festugière in *R. de Philol.* 1947 and Spoerri, *ib.* 1957.

<sup>3</sup> For these see, in brief, Cornford, *Rep.* 340f. That the features he lists were taken from Orphic tradition is argued at length in Guthrie, *OGR* ch. 5.

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between curable and incurable sinners. There follows a cosmological section, comparable to that in the *Phaedrus* and the elaborate geography of the *Phaedo*. Here however, in the fantastic form of the 'spindle of Necessity' with its composite whorl, Plato describes the orbits of the fixed stars, five planets, sun and moon according to the geocentric system of his day, with reference to such scientific facts as the distances and relative speeds of the planets, the reddish colour of Mars, and the derivation of the moon's light from the sun.<sup>1</sup>

All this imagery is, as Cornford says, 'mythical and symbolic', but as I have remarked on the *Phaedo* (p. 362), it is carried far beyond its relevance to what he calls 'the underlying doctrine' of necessity and freewill. Its disguise as the spindle turning on the knees of Necessity (and Cornford believed that what the souls see is in any case not the universe itself but a model) cannot alter the fact that Plato is describing the structure of the universe as he seriously conceived it to be, and indulging his delight in it as he did at greater length in the *Timaeus*.<sup>2</sup>

After the astronomical section comes another, lacking in the other dialogues, in which the moral is openly stated. Around Necessity, helping her to turn her spindle, sit the three Fates, of whom Lachesis holds a number of lots and samples of lives, and the souls must draw lots to determine the order in which they may choose their next life. There are far more types of life than souls to choose them, so that even the last comer, if he chooses wisely and lives it with all his powers, may pick an acceptable life. 'The responsibility is the chooser's; God is blameless', says her herald, and 'Let not the first be careless nor the last despondent.' This is the moment on which all depends, for which we must prepare ourselves by an understanding of good and evil, weighing up all the arguments in the previous discussion, considering the effect of various blends of wealth, poverty, power,

<sup>1</sup> For details see Cornford's translation pp. 340-2 and Lee's, pp. 460-3. On the localization of the 'other world' in parts of the physical universe see also p. 432 above.

<sup>2</sup> In his combination of astronomy and religion he relied much on the Pythagoreans (pp. 35 f. above) as well as their close relatives the Orphics. (On Pythagoreans and Orphics see Guthrie, *OGR* 216-21.) They taught of the orbits of the planets, their various speeds and distances, and the harmonious notes given out by them in their revolutions, which P. also brings in here. (See vol. I, 285, 295-301.)

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rank, charm, strength and weakness with different types of character and mentality, so that, taking everything into account, we may make our choice in the light of the soul's true nature, calling the just life the better and the unjust life the worse, as we have found them to be.

The danger of an ill-considered choice is especially great for one who has lived a conventionally virtuous life in an orderly society, from habit and custom without knowledge. Such souls, having no great sins to expiate, go after death to heaven, and may leave it less prepared to choose the next life than sinners who have learned from their own and others' sufferings in the underworld. In Er's story, the drawer of the very first lot chose the life of a mighty tyrant, not noticing in his greedy impetuosity that it contained such horrors as the eating of his own children. Among others Er saw Orpheus choosing the life of a swan, and Odysseus, cured of all ambition by his suffering, hunting about until he found an uneventful and obscure life which all the others had scorned and declaring that had his been the first choice he would have chosen no differently.

The choices made, Lachesis allotted to each soul a guardian spirit and guide appropriate to its choice, and after having their choices ratified and made irrevocable by the other two Fates and passing before the throne of Necessity, they were taken a day's journey through the suffocating heat of the desert plain of Lethe (Forgetfulness) to the river of the same name, also called Amelēs (Unmindfulness). All save Er had to drink of this water, so that when reborn they would have no recollection of their experiences, and some after their parching journey unwisely drank too much.<sup>1</sup> The souls then went to sleep, and at midnight amid thunder and earthquake were carried up<sup>2</sup> in different directions to be born, darting like shooting stars.

<sup>1</sup> This is a particularly interesting example of P.'s adaptation of the doctrines of the mysteries. On gold plates buried with the dead in S. Italy and Crete, the soul is instructed to avoid an unnamed spring on the left (evidently the water of Lethe) and ask for water from the lake of Memory, saying: 'My race is of Heaven, but I am parched with thirst and I perish.' The initiate would claim the right to drink of the water of Memory because he is qualified to escape from the cycle of births. See Guthrie, *OGR* 172f., 177. Though the story here is different, we recognize the lore of the same 'priests and priestesses' who according to the *Meno* taught that the soul has learned all truth in the other world but forgotten it.

<sup>2</sup> *ἐνω* 621b. Where exactly the plain and river of Lethe are supposed to be is doubtful, as are some other features of the topography of the journey of the dead. Nor does the tradition which P. is following seem to have been consistent. In the cult of Trophonius, a chthonian



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As for Er, whose part was to take back tidings of these things to the living, he returned to his body, suddenly opened his eyes and found himself on the pyre.

And so his tale was preserved from perishing, and, if we remember it, may well preserve us in turn, and we shall cross the river of Lethe safely and shall not defile our souls. This at any rate is my advice, that we should believe the soul to be immortal, capable of enduring all evil and all good, and always keep our feet on the upward way and pursue justice with wisdom. So we shall be at peace with the gods and with ourselves, both in our life here and when, like the victors in the games collecting their prizes, we receive our reward; and both in this life and in the thousand-year journey which I have described, all will be well with us.<sup>1</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Plato's city – purged of most of its 'inflammation' though not of the evil of war – is an ideal of a special sort, an ideal which takes account of the fact that human nature is a compound of reason with potentially noble but dangerous passions, capable therefore of supreme self-sacrifice in an honourable cause, but also, if seduced by its third component, lust and greed, of the most bestial cruelty. It shows how all these elements of character might work together for the good of the community if each of the main human types to which they give rise were afforded a legitimate outlet for its aspirations while recognizing, through the power of reason which all possess, that the reins of government should be in the hands of an elite both naturally fitted and specially trained for their task. It remains an ideal that could never be realized on earth, but Plato sincerely believed that earthly legislators will do better if they keep its principles – the 'truth' – in mind rather than looking to the 'imitation' constitutions of Sparta, Athens or Crete.

If some of its positive provisions rightly move us to horror, they must be seen in the light of these considerations and also of con-

spirit whose cave symbolized the subterranean world of the dead, the waters of Lethe and Mnemosyne were drunk *before* the descent, though on the gold plates they were a part of the underworld. (Paus. 9.39. See Guthrie, *G. and G.* 225, 230.)

<sup>1</sup> The last words of the *Republic*, in Lee's translation.

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temporary history. And in spite of them, the *Republic* contains political lessons appropriate to any age. They are to be found not so much in the character of the Platonic state itself as in the symbolic tale of its decay, in books 8 and 9, into successively worse types of government, society and individual citizens. One has only to think of the suggestion that the worst enemy of democracy is unchecked licence, leading by a natural swing of the pendulum to popularly supported tyranny, the extreme of authoritarian repression under a single dictator.

Essentially however the *Republic* is not a piece of political theory but an allegory of the individual human spirit, the *psyche*. The city is one which we may 'found in ourselves' by directing the stream of *eros* within us so that it flows most strongly towards wisdom and knowledge, under whose guidance the passions and appetites too can find fuller satisfaction than in the mindless alternation of want and surfeit which a Calliclean hedonist, Plato's 'tyrannical man', regards as the ideal. Goodness and happiness (united in the phrase εὖ πράττειν, to do well) are found by carrying to completion the unfinished philosophy of Socrates. First, goodness is knowledge, knowledge that there are unalterable standards fixed in nature, independent of mutable human thoughts and desires. This knowledge is taken to its highest level, and the method of its acquisition described, in the central books 5-7. Secondly, know thyself, that is, the *psyche*; and so the *psyche* is analysed, and its nature explained, in book 4, with its culmination in book 10. Finally, in the light of this knowledge, care only for the soul and its ultimate good, knowing that its best element, the philosophic, is what unites us with the divine and lives for ever. Act always in the knowledge that the soul's association with the body is only a brief episode, or series of episodes, in its eternal existence. In that faith Socrates died, when without it he could have lived, and the whole force of Plato's remarkable mind was directed at proving that he was right. Whether, in thus giving depth and content to the confessedly incomplete philosophy of his master (whose life was one of searching for a knowledge he did not possess), Plato also distorted it, may be left for the reader to decide.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following list contains particulars of books and articles briefly referred to in the text or notes, together with a few additional works. For a plain text of all the dialogues see Burnet's in the Oxford Classical Texts (n.d., prefaces dated 1899-1906). For a complete translation the one-volume Hamilton-Cairns collection (q.v.) is most convenient, and many dialogues are easily and inexpensively available in the Penguin Classics series. The Loeb Classical Library provides texts and translations for English readers, as does the Budé series for French.

Many books on Plato contain select bibliographies, e.g. vols. II and III of Friedländer's *Plato* (1964 and 1969) provide separate lists for each dialogue at the beginning of the notes to the appropriate chapter, and general works may be traced in his list of abbreviations. Among other bibliographical aids may be mentioned Cherniss's well known survey in *Lustrum*, Gigon's in the *Bibliographische Einführungen*, Rosenmeyer's ten years of *Platonic Scholarship* and Schuhl's *Quinze années*. Manasse's *Bücher über Platon* is an excellent critical review of literature in German (I, 1957) and English (II, 1961). For details of these see below.

Just as there is no ideal arrangement for a book on Plato, so there is none for its bibliography. Before compiling it I was convinced that it would be best to have a general section of works on Plato followed by separate lists, one for each dialogue, as in Friedländer. For many readers interested in a particular dialogue it would be a convenience to have the literature on it grouped together. This however would make it difficult to trace a comment on, say, the *Phaedo* in an article mainly devoted to *Meno* or *Phaedrus*, and all things considered I concluded that an undivided bibliography (like an undivided index) would be found the most generally useful. It has however been suggested to me that to append a separate list of editions and translations cited in the book might serve a useful purpose, and this I have done, again with a few additions, but the list is very selective. Commentaries without text or translation, such as Cross and Woosley's on the *Republic* or de Vries's on the *Phaedrus*, have been retained in the general section.

The last few years have seen a large output of collections of previously published articles designed to make them more readily accessible than they were in their separate periodicals. These perform a most useful service, but do not ease the task of the bibliographer. Where I know of such a re-publication I have given both references, but some cases will certainly have escaped me. The same applies to paperback reprints. A section of addenda appears on pp. 581f.

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